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**Winning the peace: the British in occupied Germany, 1945-1948.**

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**WINNING THE PEACE:**  
**THE BRITISH IN OCCUPIED GERMANY, 1945-1948**

**Christopher Knowles**

**A thesis submitted to the Department of History, Kings College,  
London, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, February 2014**

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the contribution made by twelve important and influential individuals to the development of a policy of physical and economic reconstruction, political renewal and personal reconciliation in the British Zone of occupied Germany in the first three years after the end of the Second World War. The selected individuals all possessed power, authority and influence, at different levels of the hierarchy, and collectively represent the view of the 'governing elite' of the occupation, including some of its internal differences. They have been categorised in three groups of four: those at the top of the hierarchy, the three Military Governors and one of their senior generals; four senior civilian diplomats and administrators responsible for promoting democracy in Germany; and four young officers with no adult experience but war, who held responsible and influential positions despite their youth.

A biographical approach is a novel methodology for studying the British occupation of Germany. It highlights the diversity of aims and personal backgrounds and in so doing can explain some of the apparent contradictions in occupation policy. Personal influences were especially important in a period of transition from war to peace, when official policy guidelines appeared unclear or inappropriate and organisational structures created for the occupation were short-lived and changed rapidly.

A wide range of sources has been used including memoirs and autobiographies, official documents, personal papers and oral history interviews. Although sources were created at different times for different purposes, most accounts were found to be remarkably consistent, both internally and with each other. Subjective accounts have been placed in their historical context in order to understand individuals' perceptions, motivations and personal interests, together with the limitations and constraints on their scope for action.

## Acknowledgements

Many people, too numerous to mention all by name, have helped me at various stages of my research. I would like to thank my fellow students at the Institute of Contemporary British History at Kings College London, especially Kath Sherit who organised our student reading group, and Mary Salinsky who read and commented on my draft thesis. I would like to thank the late Sir Michael Palliser and Jan Thexton for agreeing to be interviewed, and Michael Howard for giving me a signed copy of his memoir *Otherwise Occupied* and answering various questions. Renate Greenshields shared her memories of what it was like to be one of the first German war brides in Britain and introduced me to the family of Vaughan Berry. Professor George Bain kindly gave me his permission to research the papers of Allan Flanders at the Modern Records Centre. Sisters, sons, daughters, nephews and nieces of other individuals I have researched have been generous in providing family memories, including Martin and Mike Albu, Nick Chaloner, Leila Ingrams, Joan Woodward and Kate Owen, who lent me copies of personal letters from her uncle, Vaughan Berry. Librarians and archivists who have been especially helpful include Sarah Paterson at the Imperial War Museum, Andrew Riley at Churchill Archives Centre and Heinz Egleder at *Der Spiegel*. I owe a great debt of gratitude to my supervisors Professors Pat Thane and Bernd Weisbrod, who have encouraged me to think carefully about all aspects of my research. Lastly without the help and support of my wife, Mary Anne and children, Emily and Jack, I could never have started on the six year project of a part-time PhD or completed the thesis.

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## **The twelve principal individuals discussed in the thesis**

### **Field-Marshal Bernard Montgomery, 1887-1976**

Military Governor and Commander-in-Chief, 22 May 1945 – 1 May 1946

### **General Brian Robertson, 1896-1974**

Deputy Military Governor and Chief of Staff to Montgomery, *July 1945 – May 1946*

Deputy Military Governor to Sholto Douglas, *May 1946 – November 1947*

Military Governor and Commander-in-Chief, *November 1947 – September 1949*

High Commissioner to the Federal Republic of Germany, *September 1949 – June 1950*

### **Major-General Alec Bishop, 1897-1984**

Head of PR/ISC (Public Relations and Information Services Control), *June 1945 – June 1946*

Deputy Chief of Staff to Brian Robertson, *June 1946 – 1948*

Regional Commissioner for North Rhine-Westphalia, *1948 – December 1950*

### **Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sholto Douglas, 1893-1969**

Commander-in-Chief, BAFO (British Air Forces of Occupation), *August 1945 – January 1946*

Military Governor and Commander-in-Chief, *May 1946 – November 1947*

### **Harold Ingrams, 1897-1973**

Head of ALG (Administration and Local Government) branch, *July 1945 – August 1946*

### **Austen Albu, 1903-1994**

Head of German Political Department, Political Division, *February 1946 – May 1946*

Deputy Chairman, Governmental Sub-Commission, *May 1946 – November 1947*

### **Allan Flanders, 1910-1973**

Head of German Political Department, Political Division, *May 1946 – December 1947*

### **Vaughan Berry, 1891-1979**

Regional Commissioner for Westphalia, *May 1946 – October 1946*

Regional Commissioner for Hamburg, *October 1946 – May 1949*

British representative, International Authority of the Ruhr, *June 1949 – September 1950*

### **John Chaloner, 1924-2007**

Officer, Westminster Dragoons, British army of occupation, *May 1945 – July 1945*

Press Officer, Information Control, Lüneburg, Osnabrück, Hanover, *July 1945 – early 1947*

### **Michael Howard, 1926-**

Newly commissioned officer, Rifle Brigade, *February 1946 – April 1946*

Intelligence Officer, T-Force, *April 1946 – December 1947*

### **Michael Palliser, 1922-2012**

Officer, Coldstream Guards, British army of occupation, *May 1945 – January 1947*

### **Jan Thexton, 1920-2008**

NCO, Middlesex Yeomanry (signals), British army of occupation, *May 1945 – May 1946*

Control Commission Reparations Branch, Mandatory Requirements Office, Liaison officer at the British Embassy, *1946 – 1966*

# 1 Introduction

*'The only really worthwhile thing he ever did in his life'*<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 Research questions, scope and purpose of the thesis

In a personal message to his troops issued on VE Day, 8 May 1945, Field-Marshal Montgomery wrote 'We have won the German war. Let us now win the peace.'<sup>2</sup> This message was repeated many times in the months that followed,<sup>3</sup> but what he meant by 'winning the peace' was never entirely clear. British policy in occupied Germany after the Second World War is full of apparent contradictions. Despite extensive planning undertaken before the end of the war, much of the work of the occupation authorities was characterised by hasty improvisation. Economically, a policy of restricting industrial growth was pursued in parallel with one of rebuilding the physical infrastructure and promoting economic reconstruction. Though convinced of the superiority of the British way of life, the occupiers were reluctant to impose a British model of democracy by dictatorial means, preferring to allow the Germans to devise their own solutions to constitutional reform. 'Parallel worlds', in which occupiers and occupied could live separate lives without meeting each other, coexisted with extensive cooperation at work, numerous individual encounters through social and cultural activities, and personal relationships that in some cases resulted in lifelong friendships and marriage. Whether examining the economic, political, social or cultural aspects of the occupation, these contradictions make it difficult to identify any logical, coherent and distinctive 'British' policy in occupied Germany.

A general uncertainty concerning British policy towards Germany and the German people was to be expected in the transition from war to peace, as the primary task of the Allied armies changed from achieving victory in battle to the civilian administration of a defeated enemy. Politicians in London had other priorities, not least the dissolution of the wartime

---

<sup>1</sup> Brigadier Donnison, the author of the relevant volume of the British official history of the Second World War, *Civil Affairs and Military Government, North-West Europe, 1944-46*, (London: HMSO, 1961), ended the book with a 'personal impression'. Although regular officers at first disliked a posting to 'Civil Affairs', many of those he met in the course of his work told him that by the time they left 'they had come to feel it was the most rewarding work they had ever undertaken.' One even said it was 'the only really worthwhile thing he ever did in his life.'

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, K.G.* (London: Collins, 1958), p341

<sup>3</sup> E.g. *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.6, 8 Dec. 1945, p2; Vol.1 No.18, 25 May 1946, p3

coalition and the general election. The new Labour government, when it assumed office in August 1945, had an ambitious programme of domestic reform and little time or inclination to issue new guidance or instructions to the authorities in Germany. Policy directives prepared earlier had assumed that a central German government would remain in place and did not provide for unexpected circumstances, such the scale of destruction in the cities, acute shortages of food and raw materials, and the influx of millions of refugees expelled from the former German territories east of the Oder-Neisse line. Those responsible for Military Government, at all levels, had to use their own initiative to decide what course of action to take in unfamiliar circumstances.

Despite these uncertainties, the overall course of the occupation in the British Zone from the end of the war in Europe in May 1945 to the formation of an independent West German government in September 1949 was fairly straightforward. The largely negative policies agreed by the three wartime allies, Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union, at the Potsdam conference in July and August 1945, were replaced by more positive policies culminating in the European Recovery Programme, the transfer of power to elected German authorities, and numerous social and cultural exchange programmes. The negative policies are often summarised as the 'Four Ds' of the Potsdam Agreement, though different historians have used more than four words starting with the letter 'D' to describe these, referring variously to: Disarmament, Demilitarisation, Denazification, Decentralisation, Decartelisation, Deindustrialisation, Dismantling and Democratisation.<sup>4</sup> Historians have not given the same shorthand description to the positive aspects of British (or US) occupation policy, but these could be similarly characterised as the 'Three Rs' of physical and economic Reconstruction, political Renewal and personal Reconciliation, relating to the economic, political, and social and cultural aspects of occupation policy respectively.<sup>5</sup>

The 'Four Ds' were clearly intended to avoid a repetition of the policy of appeasement in the 1920s and 1930s, which had so obviously failed to prevent another war. Complete disarmament and demilitarisation were considered essential to destroy the power of the German army and officer class. Denazification was designed to remove former Nazi Party

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<sup>4</sup> [http://howitreallywas.typepad.com/how\\_it\\_really\\_was/2009/11/the-4-ds-of-the-potsdam-agreement-1945.html](http://howitreallywas.typepad.com/how_it_really_was/2009/11/the-4-ds-of-the-potsdam-agreement-1945.html), viewed 28 Nov. 2012

<sup>5</sup> Re-education might be considered as a fourth 'R', but this was a contested term and an aspiration rather than a policy.

members from positions of influence and responsibility. Decentralisation and decartelization were intended to reduce the excessive power of the state and large industrial combines. Deindustrialisation and dismantling of heavy industry were aimed at reducing Germany's economic capacity and ability to produce war plant and equipment and also to enable reparations to be paid, in the form of surplus capital equipment, to the victorious Allies and liberated countries. Democratisation cannot be described as negative, but was presented in the agreement in very general terms, as a long term goal to 'prepare for the eventual reconstruction of German political life on a democratic basis' and for the 'eventual peaceful cooperation in international life by Germany.'<sup>6</sup> There was no disagreement in principle among the Allies on these policies, although there were disputes about the detail, such as the mechanism for the payment of reparations, and significant differences soon emerged over how they were implemented.

The reasons for adopting the more positive policies of the 'Three Rs', Reconstruction, Renewal and Reconciliation, are more difficult to understand and explain. The Allies operated relatively autonomously and applied different internal policies in their zones at different times, which means that each needs to be considered separately. There was little formal cooperation before the second half of 1946, when the British and Americans agreed to unify their zones economically with effect from 1 January 1947, to form the 'Bizonie.' Discussions at the Allied Control Council in Berlin exposed disagreements rather than, as originally intended, coordinating the implementation of generally agreed policies.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the contribution made by twelve important and influential British people 'on the ground' in occupied Germany to the development and implementation of a policy of Reconstruction, Renewal and Reconciliation in the British Zone of occupied Germany. It seeks to discover what these individuals aimed to achieve, and why, and how their aims changed over time. Through focussing on the motivation and intentions of individuals, it can contribute to a fuller historical understanding of British policy and actions during a period of transition; from war to peace, from conflict to co-operation. One of the main claims made is that, in the British Zone, the positive policy of the 'Three Rs' started to

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<sup>6</sup> Beate Ruhm von Oppen (ed), *Documents on Germany under Occupation 1945-1954* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1955), p42, p43. Also available online: Protocol of the Proceedings of the Berlin (Potsdam) Conference 1 Aug. 1945, Section III, clauses 4a and 4b.  
[\[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/truman/psources/ps\\_potsdam.html\]](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/truman/psources/ps_potsdam.html) accessed 17 May 2010]

be applied very soon after the start of the occupation in the summer of 1945, under the direction of the Military Governor, Field Marshal Montgomery, with the active support of his senior generals. These more positive policies did not replace the 'Four D's' but were implemented in parallel and over time superseded them, as the negative policies were considered to have been substantially achieved.

This thesis is not intended to be a history of the occupation. Some significant aspects have been covered briefly or not at all. However, in examining the aims and intentions of individuals, it can address questions of motivation and agency and explain the reasons for some of the apparent contradictions in British policy. It can help answer questions such as how and why British attitudes changed in the transition from war to peace, and why, despite knowing of the crimes and atrocities committed by Germans during the war, many British officers and civilian administrators devoted so much time and energy to the reconstruction of their former enemy. In so doing, it is hoped it can contribute to a re-evaluation of the British contribution to post-war Germany, at a critical time in the first three years after the war.

## **1.2 Methodology: A biographical approach**

The research methodology adopted for this study was to follow twelve individuals through the archives, to gather as much information as possible on each from a variety of sources, while maintaining the professional discipline of cross-checking for accuracy and assessing evidence for internal and external consistency.

A biographical approach to the subject is novel. Collective biography<sup>7</sup> has not been used previously as an historical method for studying the British occupation of Germany,<sup>8</sup> though it has a long tradition in other areas, from classical and medieval collections of 'lives' to feminist and social historians researching those 'marginal to the historical mainstream',<sup>9</sup> and biographical methods have been used in three recent historical studies of personal

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<sup>7</sup> My use of the term 'collective biography' follows that of Krista Cowman, 'Collective Biography' in Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (eds.), *Research Methods for History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp83-100. Cowman used the term to describe historical works which set the 'lived experiences' of two or more individuals within their historical context, rather than 'prosopography', large scale statistical surveys of defined groups of people, as used in the social sciences.

<sup>8</sup> With the possible exception of an unpublished PhD thesis by Barbara Schwepcke, *The British High Commissioners in Germany: some aspects of their role in Anglo-German relations, 1949-55* (PhD Diss: London, 1991). This was a political history rather than a collective biography and covered a later period.

<sup>9</sup> Cowman, 'Collective Biography'

experiences of war, conflict and violence before, during and after the Second World War.<sup>10</sup> In adopting a biographical approach, I have tried to follow principles outlined in two theoretical studies by Krista Cowman and Simone Lässig,<sup>11</sup> and strike a balance between exploring the subjective experiences of individuals and the collective generalisation, analysis and historical judgement required to make sense of a mass of data from diverse sources.

Cowman emphasised the importance of placing subjective material in its social and political context. She argued that collective biography was a valuable historical method in its own right, that retained a focus on the individual, while locating this within collective experiences and the historical context,<sup>12</sup> quoting Ian Kershaw that individual actions 'can only be understood within the framework of the structures which conditioned them.'<sup>13</sup> According to Lässig, social historians in the 1970s, especially in Germany, attempted to create a theory-driven historical science and biography was seen as 'an antiquated and unreflective approach to history.'<sup>14</sup> Reacting against this trend, others argued that the weakness of a history concerned with structures, long term processes and mass phenomena was that 'a science of human societies will entirely lose sight of the human beings',<sup>15</sup> and there was a need 'to bring the actors back on stage.'<sup>16</sup> A biographical approach, she concluded, should not be concerned with either structure or agency, but with both.

### **Advantages and disadvantages of a biographical approach**

A collective biography offers distinct advantages for a subject, such as this thesis, that crosses the boundaries of national, political, social and cultural histories. It enables the subjective experiences of some of the leading British members of the occupation to be given due prominence, rather than subsumed within references to the policy and motivation of the 'Anglo-Americans' or 'Western Allies'. The reasons why the selected individuals acted the way they did and the influences upon them can be tracked in considerable detail, thereby

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<sup>10</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and violence through the German dictatorships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Hester Vaizey, *Surviving Hitler's War: Family Life in Germany, 1939-48* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Charles Glass, *Deserter: The last untold story of the Second World War* (London: Harper Press, 2013)

<sup>11</sup> Cowman, 'Collective Biography'; Simone Lässig, 'Introduction: Biography in Modern History – Modern History in Biography' in Volker R. Berghahn and Simone Lässig (eds.), *Biography between Structure and Agency: Central European Lives in International Historiography* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), pp1-26

<sup>12</sup> Cowman, 'Collective Biography', pp84-5

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p96

<sup>14</sup> Lässig, 'Biography in Modern History', p2

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p3, citing David Kaiser, 'Bringing the Human Actors back on Stage: The Personal Context of the Einstein-Bohr Debate', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 27, (1994), pp129-152



avoiding over-simplistic generalisations that fail to account for the complexity of British policy or fully explain the motivation of those responsible.

As an historical method, a collective biography has particular advantages for studying a time of transition, when a group of people were given a task, that of governing a country in peacetime, entirely different from the work they had been trained to perform during the war. It enables us to examine how their previous experience of, for example, the occupation of the Rhineland after the First World War or the administration of the British Empire, influenced their later actions. I have termed these personal influences the 'mental baggage' they brought with them, by which I mean their family background, education, social status, previous experience at work, networks of friends and colleagues, religious, political and moral beliefs. These personal factors were especially important at times when official policy guidelines appeared unclear or inappropriate for the circumstances they found on the ground, but do not emerge easily from studies based on official documents or from statistical surveys.

As with all historical methods, there are disadvantages to a biographical approach. It emphasises the interconnectivity of personal lives and public responsibilities but can make it difficult to examine any one subject or theme comprehensively over an extended period. A focus on the aims and intentions of a selected group of British people tends to underestimate the importance of the German responses, how policies were played out in practice and the eventual outcomes. Information on these matters had to be obtained from secondary sources and additional primary research. Furthermore, because much of the source material was subjective and some created with hindsight, evidence collected for the study had to be carefully validated. Where this could not be done, conclusions have been expressed with due caution. Despite these disadvantages, biographical methods, modified to place the subjects firmly within their historical context, seemed appropriate for a study of a relatively short period when policies and attitudes changed rapidly, and preferable to a structural, thematic or chronological approach, due to the temporary nature of the occupation and the fragmentary state of much of the evidence.

### **Selection criteria and categorisation**

The individuals considered in this study were chosen because they possessed authority, power and influence at different levels in the hierarchy and reflected some of the diversity of background and opinion among British people in occupied Germany. They therefore collectively represent, as far as possible given constraints of time and space, the view of the 'governing elite' of the occupation, including some of its internal differences and contradictions. All were based in Germany and held an official position with officer status (or civilian equivalent) in British Military Government or the Control Commission for at least one year during the period from May 1945 to May 1948. This study therefore portrays the views of British people living and working in Germany, influenced by their personal experience of the destruction in Germany at the end of the war, their contacts and, in some cases, personal relationships with Germans, and the work they did in occupied Germany. Their views were not necessarily typical of those who remained in Britain, such as government ministers, members of parliament, civil servants, visiting journalists or the general public.

Twelve was the maximum number who could be considered in sufficient depth within the time and space constraints of the thesis, whilst just enough to be representative of the most senior and influential figures in the occupation. No one British individual was so dominant that a detailed study of this one person would, in itself, explain the most significant aspects of the occupation, or was so representative that he could act as a model or 'ideal-type' for all the British occupiers.<sup>17</sup> Also, data is not available in sufficient depth or quantity to allow a large-scale statistical survey of British occupiers or quantitative analysis of the themes examined in this study, such as their reactions to the death and destruction caused by war. Even if such data were available, this approach could not take into account the fact that some individuals were much more influential than others.

To examine different aspects of the occupation, the twelve individuals have been categorised in three groups of four on the basis of three criteria: their degree of authority, power and influence, whether they worked in a civil or military position during the war, and their age. All could be considered part of the British professional middle classes, by family background, education and employment. All except one attended private rather than state-

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<sup>17</sup> The two most influential British individuals in occupied Germany were Montgomery and Robertson, the first and third Military Governors. Both are included among the twelve selected for this study.

funded schools.<sup>18</sup> Further categorisation by social class was therefore not required, as this was already implied through the primary selection of individuals with significant power and authority. Classification by gender was also not appropriate, as nearly all those in the most senior positions in the armed forces and Control Commission were men.<sup>19</sup> The views expressed by the individuals researched in this study were therefore representative of the governing elite, but may not have been typical of all British people in occupied Germany, especially those working in more junior positions, women, who were most commonly employed in welfare or other support roles, or those working for the International Military Tribunal, United Nations agencies, or for voluntary organisations.

Although the concept of 'generation' has been widely used as an explanatory category in studies of twentieth century Germany,<sup>20</sup> categorisation by age cohort or 'generation' was found to be of limited use in this study of British individuals in occupied Germany, and was not privileged above the two other criteria used to categorise twelve individuals into groups of four: their degree of power and influence, and whether they held civil or military positions during the war. Classification by age or 'generation' has been little used in studies of British history, which have tended to focus on other categories of analysis, notably social class, gender, and political allegiance. Apart from the obvious and significant contrast between the military generals, born in the late 1880s and 1890s, and the younger generation of junior officers, born in the 1920s, there do not appear to be British equivalents for the various 'generations' described by German historians, such as the '*Hitler Jugend*', the '*Flakhelfer*' or the '1945ers'.<sup>21</sup> Although age or 'generation' has been used in this study, in particular to explain differences in outlook between the 'younger generation' of junior officers and their

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<sup>18</sup> Thexton's school is not known. All the others except Chaloner, (who went to a 'progressive' Montessori school), attended well-established leading English public schools.

<sup>19</sup> The only exception was Dame (Katherine) Jane Trefusis Forbes, head of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) from 1939-1943, and Director of Welfare Services for the Control Commission in Germany from 1946-8.

<sup>20</sup> Ulrike Jureit & Michael Wildt (eds.), *Generationen: Zur Relevanz eines wissenschaftlichen Grundbegriffs* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise: Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit 1945-1973* (Göttingen, Wallstein Verlag, 2006); Ulrich Herbert, 'Liberalisierung als Lernprozeß. Die Bundesrepublik in der deutschen Geschichte – eine Skizze' in Ulrich Herbert (ed.), *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland: Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945-1980* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002), pp7-49; Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and violence through the German dictatorships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

older senior officers,<sup>22</sup> it proved most effective when used in combination with other criteria, rather than as a primary classification.

The first group discussed in this study comprises those with the highest level of authority, power and influence: the three Military Governors of the British Zone – Field-Marshal Bernard Montgomery, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Sholto Douglas and General Sir Brian Robertson – together with one of their senior generals, Sir Alec Bishop, who held a position at the top of Military Government for an extended period of five years and was also highly influential. Montgomery, Robertson and Bishop shared similar views, which were typical of the army generals who ran Military Government in the first year of the occupation. Douglas was the exception among the three military governors. His more pragmatic approach is contrasted with the idealism of the other three and represents a second, subsidiary strand among those at the top of the occupation.

Had the study been confined to those at the top, it would have presented a partial view of British policies and their outcomes. Although the army generals remained highly influential throughout the occupation, civilians were appointed to many senior positions as Regional Commissioners and departmental heads in the Control Commission. The second group studied comprises four civilian diplomats and administrators responsible for promoting democracy in Germany, whose approach to their work complemented or contrasted with that of the Military Governors and army generals. Harold Ingrams was a professional diplomat and colonial administrator with responsibility, as head of the Administration and Local Government branch of the Control Commission, for restoring democracy at local level within the British Zone. Austen Albu and Allan Flanders were two committed international socialists, appointed by John Hynd, the minister for Germany, to senior positions in the Political Division. Vaughan Berry was one of four civilian Regional Commissioners who, in May 1946, replaced the military Corps Commanders as the most senior representatives of Military Government at regional level. Studying the four selected individuals demonstrates some of the diversity of aims within one policy area, governmental organisation and the promotion of democracy. Civilian officials in other Control Commission divisions attempted, in similarly

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<sup>22</sup> See page 201ff below for a more detailed discussion of the advantages and limitations of classifying 'young officers with no adult experience but war', as a 'younger generation', in contrast to the older, much smaller, but more uniform and therefore 'stronger generation' of military generals. The third group, of four civilian administrators, does not fit easily with any concept of 'generations'.

diverse ways and with mixed success, to revive the economy, reform the police, control print and broadcast media, or restore the education system, purged of its Nazi elements.

In order to assess whether younger officers, lower down the ranks, shared the aims of those at the top of the Military Government, the third group comprises four young officers responsible for the implementation of policy. They therefore represent the opposite end of the spectrum from the Military Governors on criteria of age and influence, and could be considered a 'younger generation' with no adult experience but war, in contrast with the older 'generation' of military governors and army generals, and the very diverse group of civilian administrators. Two of the four 'young officers', John Chaloner and Michael Howard, held responsible positions with considerable freedom of action and were influential in their own right. This was not atypical. Many other junior officers were given positions of great responsibility, freedom to act on their own initiative and were highly influential in their own areas, for example Ivan Hirst, the British officer who 'saved' the Volkswagen works from being dismantled.

The other two young officers were selected in order to explore the subjective experiences of British people in occupied Germany in more detail. Both were the subject of oral history interviews I conducted for this study. Jan Thexton approached the Centre for Contemporary British History (CCBH) in September 2007 asking if it would be possible to record his life history. His experience was especially relevant for this study, as his role changed completely during the occupation, from removing war plants and equipment as reparations, to assisting British manufacturers sell weapons to the newly formed West German armed services in the 1950s. He met and married his wife in Germany. Sir Michael Palliser agreed to be interviewed after I met him in September 2009 at a Witness Seminar organised by the Allied Museum of Berlin, at which he spoke of his experiences as a young officer in the city.<sup>23</sup> His role at the time was that of an ordinary and, by his own account, typical junior officer, which acts as a counterweight to the apparently more exceptional experiences of the other three in this group. He subsequently had a distinguished career in the Foreign Office, rising to Permanent Under-Secretary in 1975.

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<sup>23</sup> The Allied Museum, Berlin, *The Windsor Park Seminar. Berlin: The British Perspective 1945-1990*, 1-2 Sep. 2009

The four selected young officers were not necessarily typical of a fairly large and diverse group and unlike the senior officers and civilian administrators, little written evidence of their activities has survived in the archives. To compensate for any bias arising from a relatively small sample and a dependence on personal accounts rather than contemporary documents, research findings for this group were validated through reference to oral history interviews with a further twenty young men and one woman, undertaken by the Imperial War Museum (IWM) Sound Archive. The views expressed by the IWM interviewees on the issues examined in this study, such as their personal aims, relationships with Germans and attitudes to Russian soldiers and Displaced Persons (DPs), were consistent with those of the four selected individuals and have been cited as evidence where appropriate. Exceptions have also been noted. The criteria used to select interviews from the IWM Sound Archive and methodological issues arising from the use of this particular source are discussed in Appendix A.

### **Exclusions**

No individuals have been deliberately excluded and as far as I am aware, all the most significant published accounts and memoirs written by those who worked for British Military Government and the Control Commission have been consulted. Material written by or relating to a wide range of individuals, in addition to the twelve 'protagonists', has been used to provide additional background and context.<sup>24</sup>

Sources in which the authors stated what they aimed to achieve, such as personal memoirs and correspondence, oral history interviews, official reports and policy recommendations, speeches, newspaper articles or radio broadcasts, exist for only a limited number of people. Consequently the selection was affected by the availability of suitable sources. Generals Gerald Templer and Brian Horrocks, for example, were considered for inclusion among the twelve selected individuals, as both were highly influential during the first year of the occupation, but I found relatively little material on their time in Germany in the archives. There was, however, no suggestion in the materials I consulted that their views differed significantly from those of Montgomery, Robertson, Bishop or other influential army generals. Similarly Vaughan Berry, whose personal papers are held at Somerset Heritage Centre and

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<sup>24</sup> See bibliography

Bath Record Office, was selected in preference to his three colleagues appointed as Regional Commissioners in May 1946, William Asbury, Hugh de Crespigny and Gordon Macready, whose personal papers have been destroyed or are not publicly available.

Some important individuals were not selected because they joined the Military Government or Control Commission towards the end of or after the period covered, such as the highly influential education advisors, Sir Robert Birley and Professor T.H. Marshall. Because the focus of the study is on British people in occupied Germany, I also decided to exclude returning German or East European exiles, many of whom volunteered to join the British army during the war and later worked for the Control Commission, such as the economic advisor, E.F. (Fritz) Schumacher, agricultural advisor Werner Klatt, and press officers Michael Thomas and Robert Maxwell.

The aims and activities of politicians and civil servants based in London, including the two government ministers responsible for internal German affairs, John Hynd and Frank Pakenham, Lord Longford, were explored but not researched in depth. Contemporary accounts by visiting writers, journalists and other individuals who played an indirect, unofficial, or temporary part in the British occupation were also consulted but not examined in depth. A full list is provided in the bibliography.

### **Time period**

The time period covered in this study is from the end of the war in Europe in May 1945 to currency reform and the start of the Berlin air-lift in May and June 1948. These boundaries are flexible. Allied troops first entered Germany at the end of 1944 and planning for the occupation started much earlier, so there is occasional reference to these earlier phases of the occupation. The election of an independent West German government in September 1949 or the formal end of the occupation in 1955 were considered as alternative end points, but would have required the inclusion of more material than was possible within the time and space available. However, some policies took time to play out and reference is made to later events and outcomes where this appears relevant. The focus of the study, however, is on the first three years, when British military officers and civilian officials made a rapid

adjustment from occupation policies devised during the war to those they considered appropriate for peace.

### **How the thesis is organised**

The thesis is divided into three parts, each addressing one of the three groups of four individuals. Although there is considerable overlap, there is also a general chronological and thematic progression through the thesis. The first part attempts to explain why those at the top of Military Government initiated a policy of reconstruction soon after the start of the occupation and how this developed over the first two years. The second part examines different approaches to achieving political renewal and how the emphasis changed over the three years from May 1945 to May 1948. The third part assesses the motivation of a group of younger and more junior officers, examines whether they shared the aims of their seniors, and discusses the issue of personal relationships between British and Germans and the contribution this made to personal reconciliation between former enemies. In the final chapter I have brought together common themes and drawn some conclusions which apply to the thesis as a whole.

### **1.3 Sources**

A wide range of sources has been used, including memoirs and autobiographies, official documents in the public archives, personal papers and oral history interviews, with the advantages and disadvantages normally attaching to each. The focus of the research, the aims and intentions of individuals, is necessarily subjective. Much of the evidence presented in the thesis portrays the situation in occupied Germany through the eyes of the twelve individuals. In some cases, such as personal memoirs, autobiographies and oral history interviews, accounts were generated with hindsight and are therefore subject to the fallibility of memory and to conscious or unconscious attempts to distort the record to create a coherent narrative of past lives. For this reason, wherever possible, subjective accounts were checked against other sources.

The British occupation of Germany is now on the edge of living memory. Oral history interviews I conducted for this study comprise the principal source for two of the twelve individuals, Palliser and Thexton. Interviews conducted by others were used as subsidiary



sources for Robertson, Howard and Chaloner,<sup>25</sup> and interviews with twenty British men and one woman held by the IWM Sound Archive were consulted to provide background and context. Oral history offers similar difficulties in analysis and interpretation to memoirs and autobiographies and, as with all historical sources, the context and the purpose for which the record was created needs to be understood. However, it can reveal aspects which are not easily accessible from the official record, in particular the subjective experience of the individual: how it felt at the time, why they believed they were there, assumptions taken for granted and only understood, expressed and recorded in later accounts.<sup>26</sup>

Some historians have claimed that oral interviews and personal life histories are more problematic than other sources.<sup>27</sup> What is left out can be as important as what is included and errors can reveal hidden meanings.<sup>28</sup> Sociologists have pointed out that biographies are not only sources of raw data, but social artefacts, created at the time of re-telling. Differences between what happened at the time and the story told in a later account may arise in three ways: through differences between what happened and what was experienced by the subject; through the fallibility of memory; and through the process of re-telling and construction of a narrative after the event.<sup>29</sup> However, the same issues apply to contemporary written documents in the public archives, though normally over a shorter time period, as these are also social artefacts, constructed for a specific purpose.<sup>30</sup>

Life histories and biographies may be especially problematical when used to research events and experiences which have been contested, and subsequently re-interpreted in personal or

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<sup>25</sup> Oral History Interview with General Lord Robertson of Oakridge, 11 August 1970 by Theodore A. Wilson (Harry S. Truman Library & Museum) [[www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/robertsn.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/robertsn.htm) accessed 12 May 2010]; IWM Sound Archive accession number 31405 (Michael Howard); Der Spiegel private business archive, interviews with John Chaloner, 21 Oct. 2003 and 2 Nov. 2006

<sup>26</sup> As Alessandro Portelli has noted, the subjectivity of the speaker is an advantage for oral history, conveying emotional content, feeling and attitudes as much as facts, Alessandro Portelli, 'What makes oral history different' in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp63-74

<sup>27</sup> Gabriele Rosenthal, *Erlebte und erzählte Lebensgeschichte: Gestalt und Struktur biographischer Selbstbeschreibungen* (Frankfurt & New York: Campus, 1995); Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); Alistair Thomson, 'Life Stories and Historical Analysis' in Gunn and Faire (eds.), *Research Methods for History*, pp101-117

<sup>28</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991)

<sup>29</sup> Rosenthal, *Erlebte und erzählte Lebensgeschichte*, p14

<sup>30</sup> For example a report by Goronwy Rees of a tour of the British Zone with William Strang in July 1945 (FO 1056/540), and many other contemporary written documents, need to be read with an awareness of possible errors introduced through the same three factors: differences between the situation as it was and what the author perceived and experienced at the time, possible lapses in memory during the time that elapsed between the event occurring and the author committing his or her memories to paper, and the purpose of the record and the process of writing the document, taking account of its method of creation and expected audience.

public memories.<sup>31</sup> In other cases the interviewee may have performed an action, participated in an event, or seen or heard something of which they were later ashamed, which they thought might cause conflict with the interviewer, or which was traumatic, leading to later adjustment in how it was remembered or re-told. Although valuable in helping to build a model of good interviewing practice, it should not be assumed that similar difficulties apply in all situations. Gabriele Rosenthal's critique of life history stories,<sup>32</sup> for example, was based on her experience interviewing former Hitler Youth members, German people 'living with a Nazi past', and Holocaust survivors in Israel. The example of a German train driver reluctant to talk about driving a trainload of prisoners to Auschwitz, or her own experiences as a non-Jewish German woman interviewing Holocaust survivors in Israel, were likely to raise issues regarding the interpretation of evidence, which do not necessarily apply in the much less contested circumstances of British army veterans interviewed for the IWM Sound Archive, Robertson's interview for the Truman Presidential Library, or my own interviews with Palliser and Thexton.<sup>33</sup>

Wherever possible, personal accounts were validated through reference to contemporary sources. There is an abundance of contemporary written material in the archives. Although this is often fragmentary, poorly indexed and, in the case of personal papers, not located in its original context, I was able to find many documents which provided direct evidence of individuals' aims and intentions, as expressed at the time in different contexts. For the first two groups, the military generals and civilian administrators, contemporary written materials in the National Archives and collections of personal papers in other archives comprised the principle sources used. In the case of the four young officers discussed in chapter seven, however, relatively few contemporary written sources were available and a comprehensive validation of personal evidence was not possible. As Paul Thompson has noted, lapses in memory and confusion over specific events are not uncommon, especially among elderly

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<sup>31</sup> Many of the articles in Perks and Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, which discuss the accuracy and reliability of oral history records refer to subjects heavily contested in public memory, or to projects not generally typical of historical research, such as anthropological studies or interviewing people with learning disabilities.

<sup>32</sup> Rosenthal, *Erlebte und erzählte Lebensgeschichte*

<sup>33</sup> The situation in France appears to have been different again. In his history of the German occupation of France, Robert Gildea (Professor of French History at Oxford University) argued that, in this case, as the official myths of occupation and resistance became established in public consciousness after the war, some memories of the occupation were suppressed. Gildea claimed that the 55 oral history interviews he undertook for the study enabled him to discover different and conflicting views, which were as, if not more, credible than the official record, writing that: 'There is a school of thought that dismisses oral history as unreliable evidence, as the ranting of old men and women ... My own experience, however, shows that with the passage of time those who witnessed the Occupation are willing to talk candidly as never before.' Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains - In Search of the German Occupation 1940-1945* (London: Macmillan, 2002), p10

people, whose memories are usually better at recalling recurrent events, atmosphere and characters, than specific details of past events.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, by cross referencing individual accounts with one another and with contemporary records, it was possible to form a judgement as to their accuracy and reliability. Perhaps surprisingly, despite using sources created at different times for different purposes, and in contrast with well-documented concerns regarding the fallibility of memory, later memoirs, oral history and other interviews were remarkably consistent with the contemporary record,<sup>35</sup> though there were some errors and omissions, assumptions based on hearsay rather than personal experience and differences in emphasis and interpretation.<sup>36</sup> As expected in a study of twelve individuals, with great differences of age, personal background, previous experience, official responsibilities and political views, attitudes were diverse, but there was little evidence of any significant distortion, concealment, or gaps in the evidence collected.

As Mary Fulbrook has argued, 'subjective perceptions and self-representations themselves form a crucial part of history.'<sup>37</sup> Individuals have different experiences and perceive the same or similar events differently. Tracking how their self-perceptions changed over time can reveal hidden expectations and unspoken assumptions. Their perceptions can be related to each other, and to the historical context, to identify patterns and trends. Although many of the sources used in this study are subjective accounts, they can therefore help us understand the historical context and structures within which the individuals lived and worked.

The overall impression I gained from reading many different accounts, was that their understanding and personal interpretation of the occupation, and their role within it, had been created while they were in Germany or soon after they left, and remained largely unchanged since. It was an seen as an exceptional time, in some cases a formative

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<sup>34</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p137

<sup>35</sup> For example, I expected to find that attitudes towards communism and the Soviet Union expressed in later memoirs and interviews would have been influenced by the prevalent Cold War mentality of the 1950s and 1960s, and therefore different from those expressed in official records held at The National Archives, but this was not the case. Many earlier records from 1945-8 showed similarly hostile attitudes.

<sup>36</sup> For example, many references to Russian soldiers in Berlin by IWM interviewees were based on hearsay rather than on their personal experience. See below pp235-237. Although their accounts may have been exaggerated or based on atypical examples, and should not therefore be used as evidence of Russian soldiers' actual behaviour in Berlin, the accounts comprise a useful indication of British soldiers' attitudes prior to the Berlin blockade, and are consistent with other accounts, such as my interview with Palliser and contemporary written evidence, such as Montgomery's reports, memos and conferences.

<sup>37</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and violence through the German dictatorships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p5

influence on the rest of their lives, but also as a neglected period, not well understood by those who had not been there in person, and one which deserved greater prominence as one of the 'untold stories' of the war and its aftermath.

A more detailed note of the various sources used, and the advantages and disadvantages pertaining to each, is provided in Appendix A.

## 1.4 Historiography

This thesis lies at the intersection of the national histories of Britain and of Germany, at a time of transition between two contrasting periods described by Eric Hobsbawm as 'The Age of Catastrophe' and 'The Golden Age'.<sup>38</sup> Historians of modern Germany have generally treated the occupation as part of the pre-history of the Federal Republic (BRD) in the West and the German Democratic Republic (DDR) in the East, leading to liberalisation, democratisation and eventual reunification in 1990.<sup>39</sup> Alternatively, they have emphasised the legacy of death and destruction, twelve years of Nazi dictatorship and the Holocaust on the subsequent history of Germany.<sup>40</sup> This thesis aims to contribute to both approaches. It clarifies the motivation and intentions of the British governing elite in occupied Germany, at a critical time during the first three years of the occupation. It also provides a view of their reactions to death and destruction, the war and the Holocaust, which can be compared to those of others who were in Germany at the same time, including Germans, the victorious Allies, and DPs of many nationalities.

As a study of twelve British people who were for a short time the rulers of a country they had recently defeated in war, it also forms part of the history of British engagement (and disengagement) with the outside world, as a great power in Europe and as global empire builders and administrators. As the author of a recent study of Anglo-German relations in occupied Hamburg wrote: 'when the British were discussing the Germans, they were also

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<sup>38</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes* (London: Abacus, 1995)

<sup>39</sup> For example Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Ulrich Herbert, 'Liberalisierung als Lernprozeß. Die Bundesrepublik in der deutschen Geschichte – eine Skizze' in Ulrich Herbert (ed.), *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland: Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945-1980* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002), pp7-49; Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: from War to Peace* (London, New York, Sydney, Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2009)

<sup>40</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1997); Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, (eds.), *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Frank Biess & Robert G. Moeller (eds.), *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War on Europe* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010)

talking about themselves.<sup>41</sup> Anglo-German relations have retained a prominence created by over a century of economic rivalry and two world wars, which has still not been resolved after nearly seventy years of peace and cooperation.<sup>42</sup> Angus Calder, for example, argued that British identity was reshaped during the war as the antithesis of everything that was perceived as German.<sup>43</sup> A study of the occupation can contribute to the history of Britain as well as to that of Germany.

The first histories of the British occupation of Germany were written by officers who were there at the time or with their close cooperation, notably Michael Balfour and John Mair, *Four Power Control in Germany and Austria 1945-1946*, published in 1956, and the relevant volume of the official history of the war by Frank Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government. North-West Europe 1944-1946*, published in 1961.<sup>44</sup> Subsequent historical studies concentrated on the political context, international relations and the emergence of the Cold War.<sup>45</sup> Issues such as whether the division of Germany was inevitable and when was the 'Turning Point' in British policy towards Germany continued to be debated well into the 1990s.<sup>46</sup> Many generals and senior administrators in Germany published their memoirs or were the subject of biographies.<sup>47</sup> Most of the early studies shared a positive view of the occupation, the creation of a western, anti-communist alliance, and the British contribution to the 'miracle' of a stable and prosperous West Germany.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Frances Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter in Occupied Hamburg, 1945-50* (PhD Diss: Columbia University, 2006), p45

<sup>42</sup> On Anglo-German relations see Anthony J. Nichols, *Always Good Neighbours – Never Good Friends? Anglo-German Relations 1949-2001* (London: German Historical Institute London, 2005); Gerald Hughes, "Don't let's be beastly to the Germans": Britain and the German Affair in History', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.17, No.2, 2006, pp257-283; John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War: The British and the Germans since 1890* (London: Little Brown, 2006); Patrick Major, 'Britain and Germany: A Love-Hate Relationship', *German History*, Vol.26, No.4, 2008, pp457-468

<sup>43</sup> Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991), p196

<sup>44</sup> Michael Balfour and John Mair, *Four Power Control in Germany and Austria 1945-1946* (Oxford: Survey of International Affairs 1939-1946, Oxford University Press, 1956); Frank Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government. North-West Europe 1944-1946* (London: HMSO, 1961)

<sup>45</sup> Robert G. Moeller, 'Writing the History of West Germany' in Robert G. Moeller (ed.), *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society and Culture in the Adenauer Era* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp1-30

<sup>46</sup> Josef Foscchepoth, 'British interest in the division of Germany after the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.21, 1986; Anne Deighton, *The Impossible Peace: Britain, the Division of Germany and the Origins of the Cold War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); John E. Farquharson, 'From Unity to Division: what prompted Britain to change its policy in Germany in 1946', *European History Quarterly*, Vol.26, 1996, pp81-123

<sup>47</sup> For an overview of the extensive historiography on Montgomery see Colin Baxter, *Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery 1887-1976: A Selected Bibliography* (Westport, Connecticut, London, Greenwood Press, 1999). Robertson did not keep a diary or write his memoirs but was the subject of a biography by David Williamson, *A Most Diplomatic General: The life of General Lord Robertson of Oakridge* (London, Washington: Brassey's, 1996). Other senior British officers, diplomats and administrators who have written memoirs or been the subject of biographies include Sholto Douglas, Brian Horrocks, Alec Bishop, Gerald Templar, Alec Cairncross, William Strang, Noel Annan and Robert Birley. A full list is provided in the bibliography.

<sup>48</sup> E.g. Brian Robertson, Lord Robertson of Oakridge, 'A Miracle? Potsdam 1945 – Western Germany 1965', *International Affairs*, Vol.41, No.3, (1965), pp401-410

In contrast to self-congratulatory accounts by British generals and officials, many historians in the 1970s and 1980s portrayed the British as incompetent, ineffective or as hindering German attempts to reform the structure of government and society, echoing earlier criticism in both the British and German press.<sup>49</sup> British planning for the occupation had been 'haunted by the past'.<sup>50</sup> The British Zone of occupation in 1945-6 was 'a badly managed disaster area'.<sup>51</sup> Radical German historians reflected contemporary left-wing concerns that West German society remained authoritarian and repressive and had never been properly democratised, liberalised or modernised. They argued, in a debate over '*Neuanfang oder Restauration*', that the end of the war and the 'collapse' of May 1945 were not a definitive break with the past, as suggested by the idea of *Stunde Null*, Zero Hour, but the precursor to a conservative restoration, aided and abetted by the Allies, in which many elements of Weimar and Nazi Germany reappeared in the Federal Republic of the Adenauer era.<sup>52</sup>

The role of the British occupiers in the immediate post-war period and their contribution to the early development of the Federal Republic was further marginalised or ignored, in the debate on whether the 'Americanization' of German industry, culture and society was to be welcomed, as helping to promote liberal democracy and the social market economy, or deplored, signifying a decline in quality and standards and the 'Coca-colonization' of German society.<sup>53</sup> When US and German historians referred to 'Allied' policies or attitudes, the British contribution was either assumed to be identical to the American or ignored, in view of

<sup>49</sup> For example Günter Tittel, 'Von der "Verwaltung des Mangels" zur "Verhinderung der Neuordnung". Ein Überblick über die Hauptprobleme der Wirtschaftspolitik in der Britischen Zone' in Claus Scharf and Hans-Jürgen Schröder (eds.), *Die Deutschlandpolitik Grossbritanniens und die Britische Zone* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979), pp129-149. For criticism of the occupation in the British press and Parliament see Jochen Thies, "'What is going on in Germany?'" Britische Militärverwaltung in Deutschland 1945-6' in Scharf and Schröder (eds.), *Die Deutschlandpolitik Grossbritanniens und die Britische Zone*, pp29-50; Matthew Frank, 'The New Morality – Victor Gollancz, 'Save Europe Now' and the German Refugee Crisis, 1945-46', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.17, No.2, 2006, pp230-256. For contemporary criticism of the occupation by Germans see Barbara Marshall, 'German attitudes to British Military Government 1945-1947', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.15, 1980, pp655-684; Josef Foscipoth, 'German reaction to Defeat and Occupation' in Robert G. Moeller (ed.), *West Germany under Construction*, pp73-89

<sup>50</sup> Lothar Kettenacker, 'British Post-war planning for Germany: haunted by the Past' in Ulrike Jordan (ed.), *Conditions of Surrender, Britons and Germans witness the end of the war* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1997)

<sup>51</sup> John E. Farquharson, 'The British Occupation of Germany, 1945-1946: A Badly Managed Disaster Area?' *German History*, Vol.11, No.3, 1993, pp316-338

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, articles in the section on 'Neuanfang oder Restauration: Neuordnungsversuche in der britischen Besatzungszone' in Josef Foscipoth & Rolf Steininger (eds.), *Britische Deutschland- und Besatzungspolitik* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1985)

<sup>53</sup> Uta G. Poiger, 'Rock 'n' Roll, Female Sexuality and the Cold War Battle over German Identities' in Robert G. Moeller (ed.), *West Germany under Construction*, p381; Ralph Willett, *The Americanisation of Germany 1945-1949* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989). See also the collection of articles on 'Americanization', by Boehling, Gienow-Hecht, Goedde, Kroes and Poiger in *Diplomatic History*, Vol.23, No.1, (Winter 1999)

increasing US dominance throughout Europe, in all spheres of human activity; political, economic, social and cultural.<sup>54</sup> As one historian commented, writing in 1997:

Only recently has research begun to depart from the German perspective that focused on unsuccessful and destructive British policies and that characterized British policy as hypocritical and myopic, even though British policy was quite insignificant, given the dominant position of the United States.<sup>55</sup>

According to Bernd Weisbrod, this process has gone too far and historians have incorrectly labelled as 'Americanization' social and cultural change in cases such as broadcast television, where the example of the BBC was highly influential, different countries in Europe evolved their own national institutions and practices, and West Germany followed a British rather than an American model. Weisbrod suggested that his colleagues' historical perception may be due as much to US cultural policy and the 'Americanization' of German post-war historians, as to any genuine 'Americanization' of the West German press or broadcast media.<sup>56</sup>

As Robert Moeller noted, the trend towards social and cultural history came late to the study of post-war Germany.<sup>57</sup> In addition to exploring processes of 'cultural transmission' and 'Americanization', historians found evidence of social and cultural continuities within Germany which spanned the great divide of 1945.<sup>58</sup> Interest in any British contribution to post-war German society was diminished still further, as historians discovered that, despite being subject to a political and economic settlement imposed upon them and to geopolitical forces outside their control, 'in the 1950s West Germans made their own history and created themselves'.<sup>59</sup>

More recently, historians have been interested in how a violent past has been remembered, commemorated and mourned. A collection of articles edited by Richard Bessel and Dirk

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<sup>54</sup> E.g. Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, gender and foreign relations 1945-49* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003); Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise: Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit 1945-1973* (Göttingen, Wallstein Verlag, 2006)

<sup>55</sup> Josef Foscaphoth, 'German reaction to Defeat and Occupation', p87

<sup>56</sup> Bernd Weisbrod, 'Eine ganz unamerikanische Tante: Die BBC und der nationale Medienstil in der Nachkriegszeit' in Belinda Davis, Thomas Lindenburger, Michael Wildt (eds.), *Alltag, Erfahrung, Eigensinn* (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag, 2008), p292

<sup>57</sup> Moeller, 'Writing the History of West Germany', p5

<sup>58</sup> E.g. James M. Diehl 'Change and Continuity in the Treatment of German *Kriegsopfer*' in Moeller (ed.), *West Germany under Construction*, pp93-108; Curt Garner, 'Public Service Personnel in West Germany in the 1950s: Controversial Policy Decisions and their Effects of Social Composition, Gender Structure, and the Role of Former Nazis' in Moeller (ed.), *West Germany under Construction*, pp135-195; Martin Broszat, Klaus-Dietmar Henke and Hans Woller (eds.), *Von Stalingrad zur Währungsreform: Zur Sozialgeschichte des Umbruchs in Deutschland* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1988)

<sup>59</sup> Moeller, 'Writing the History of West Germany', p2

Schumann, for example, re-examined public and private memories, with the aim of understanding of how ordinary citizens survived and emerged from the horrors of war.<sup>60</sup> There is a long-standing tradition in German historiography of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or critical engagement with the past. In part this was a response to the challenge posed by theories, such as the 'Silence over the Holocaust' or the 'Inability to Mourn',<sup>61</sup> which attempted to explain how individual and collective memories can be distorted following mass violence and trauma. Following this tradition, W.G. Sebald, for example, criticised 'people's ability to forget what they do not want to know, to overlook what is before their eyes'.<sup>62</sup> Historical studies, such as the volume edited by Bessel and Schumann, have shown that theories such as these, based mainly on collective psychology, need to be re-evaluated in the light of historical evidence, to provide a more nuanced view of what Germans and others in Europe did and did not remember,

In the 1980s and 1990s, after official British documents became available for study in accordance with the thirty year rule, historians of the Occupation produced monographs and articles on various subjects, covering many aspects of British policy, including, *inter alia*, economic development, industrial policy, denazification, re-education, food and rationing, and case studies of specific geographical areas.<sup>63</sup> British aims in occupied Germany were described as the restoration of peace and the preservation of Britain's status as a great power,<sup>64</sup> economic security and economic reconstruction,<sup>65</sup> the restoration of conditions of

<sup>60</sup> Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann (eds.), *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). See also Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001); Monica Black, 'Death and the Making of West Berlin, 1948-1961', *German History*, Vol.27, No.1, 2009, pp6-31; Alf Lüdtke and Bernd Weisbrod (eds.), *No Man's Land of Violence: Extreme Wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006); Frank Biess & Robert G. Moeller (eds.), *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War on Europe* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010)

<sup>61</sup> Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern: Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens* (Munich, 1967); Hannah Arendt, 'The Aftermath of Nazi Rule: Report from Germany', *Commentary* 10, October, 1950

<sup>62</sup> W.G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003), p41

<sup>63</sup> Ian D. Turner (ed.), *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones 1945-1955* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1989); Adolf Birke and Eva Mayring (eds.), *Britische Besatzung in Deutschland: Aktienschliessung und Forschungsfelder* (London: German Historical Institute, 1992); Alec Cairncross, *The Price of War: British Policy on German Reparations 1941 – 49* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Alan Kramer, *The West German Economy, 1945-1955* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1991); Jill Jones, 'Eradicating Nazism from the British Zone of Germany: early policy and practice', *German History*, Vol.8, No.2, 1990, pp145-162; Nicholas Pronay and Keith Wilson (eds.), *The Political Re-education of Germany and her Allies after World War II* (London & Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985); Michael Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg: Besatzerleben 1945-1958* (Munich and Hamburg: Dölling und Gallitz Verlag, 2011); Gisela Schwarze, *Eine Region im demokratischen Aufbau: Der Regierungsbezirk Münster 1945-6* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1984)

<sup>64</sup> Lothar Kettenacker, *Krieg zur Friedenssicherung: Die Deutschlandplanung der britischen Regierung während des zweiten Weltkrieges* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), p11, p517

<sup>65</sup> Ian Turner, 'British Policy Towards German Industry, 1945-9: Reconstruction, Restriction or Exploitation?' in Turner (ed.), *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany*, pp67-91



economic stability,<sup>66</sup> political re-education,<sup>67</sup> the promotion of British democracy<sup>68</sup> and the propagation the British 'way of life' or 'spreading our creed'.<sup>69</sup> Although these descriptions are valid as broad generalisations, there has been little attempt to explain how conflicting aims were reconciled, how they evolved over time, or the motivation of key individuals responsible for the formation and implementation of policy. Whereas consolidated histories of the US and French Zones and of the Russians in Germany are available,<sup>70</sup> there is still no single volume history of the British Zone which attempts to link these various threads together and place the activities of the British in Germany in the context of the post-war national histories of Germany and Britain.<sup>71</sup>

In addition to the academic historiography, and perhaps in part because there is no generally accepted overview of the history of the British occupation of Germany, writers in other fields have produced works which have influenced public perceptions of the period. These include a five part television documentary, *Zone of Occupation*, first broadcast in 1981, which offered a highly critical account of British activities and personnel, and Tom Bower's books written in the style of investigative journalism, *Blind Eye to Murder* and *The Paperclip Conspiracy*,<sup>72</sup> which provided an impassioned indictment of the Allies for not giving due consideration to the victims of the Holocaust. Public perceptions have also been influenced by other media, such as war films and Cold War spy thrillers and continue to be viewed through the distorted lens of popular prejudices, football rivalry and well-known fictional representations of Anglo-German interactions, such as the television series, *Fawlty Towers*.

In the course of researching twelve selected individuals, I have drawn on sources from the secondary literature in order to place them in their historical context. Sources are cited in the

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<sup>66</sup> Ian D. Turner, *British Occupation Policy and its Effects on the Town of Wolfsburg and the Volkswagenwerk, 1945-1949* (PhD Diss: Manchester UMIST, 1984), p730

<sup>67</sup> Pronay and Wilson (eds.), *The Political Re-education of Germany*, p1

<sup>68</sup> Bessel, *Germany 1945: from War to Peace*, p288

<sup>69</sup> Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter in Occupied Hamburg*, p291

<sup>70</sup> John Gimbel, *The American Occupation of Germany: Politics and the Military, 1945-1949* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1968); F. Roy Willis, *The French in Germany: 1945-1949*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1962); Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995)

<sup>71</sup> Apart from three popular rather than academic histories: Douglas Botting, *In the Ruins of the Reich*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985); Giles MacDonagh, *After the Reich* (London: John Murray (Publishers), 2007); Frederick Taylor, *Exorcising Hitler: The Occupation and Denazification of Germany* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011). Although published over twenty years ago, the best single volume summary of British academic research on the occupation is still the compilation, Turner (ed.), *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany*.

<sup>72</sup> Tom Bower, *Blind Eye to Murder: Britain, America and the Purging of Nazi Germany – A Pledge Betrayed* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1995); Tom Bower, *The Paperclip Conspiracy: The Battle for the Spoils and Secrets of Nazi Germany* (London: Paladin, 1988)

footnotes where appropriate and a full list is provided in the bibliography. Some of the most comprehensive works on themes and issues directly relevant to this thesis have not been translated into English and so may not be familiar to some British historians. The most significant secondary sources consulted, in both English and German, include Farquharson, Trittel and Wildt on the food crisis,<sup>73</sup> Reusch on local government and administrative reform,<sup>74</sup> Hurwitz on the 'Fusion' campaign in Berlin,<sup>75</sup> Hodenberg on the West German media,<sup>76</sup> Kramer on the West German economy,<sup>77</sup> numerous works on German socialist exiles in Britain, an unpublished thesis by Frances Rosenfeld on the Anglo-German encounter in occupied Hamburg,<sup>78</sup> Brawand on John Chaloner and the origins of *Der Spiegel*<sup>79</sup> and Jacobmeyer on DPs.<sup>80</sup>

In summary, the historiography of the British occupation of Germany has progressed from eye-witness accounts from Allied officers who were there at the time, through a period of critical revision and re-interpretation in the 1970s and 1980s, when historians raised new concerns and questioned the assumptions on which the early Federal Republic of Germany was based, to the present, when historical study of the British in Germany remains a field of specialist interest, but appears to have little connection with much of the mainstream national historiography of post-war Germany or Britain. This study seeks to contribute to the relevant historiographies, by providing a better understanding of the motivation, aims and intentions of the British governing elite in occupied Germany. Through identifying some of the limitations and constraints under which they operated, it also places individuals within their historical context and explores one aspect of British engagement with the outside world, and with Germany in particular.

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<sup>73</sup> John E. Farquharson, *The Western Allies and the Politics of Food, Agrarian Management in Postwar Germany* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1985); Günter J. Trittel, *Hunger und Politik: Die Ernährungsfrage in der Bizone (1945-1949)*, (Frankfurt & New York: Campus Verlag, 1990); Michael Wildt, *Der Traum vom Sattwerden; Hunger und Protest, Schwarzmarkt und Selbsthilfe in Hamburg 1945-1948* (Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 1986)

<sup>74</sup> Ulrich Reusch, *Deutsches Berufsbeamtentum und Britische Besatzung 1943-1947* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1985)

<sup>75</sup> Harold Hurwitz, *Demokratie und Antikommunismus in Berlin nach 1945: Vol.4, Die Anfänge des Widerstands* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1990)

<sup>76</sup> Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise: Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit 1945-1973* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006)

<sup>77</sup> Alan Kramer, *The West German Economy, 1945-1955* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1991)

<sup>78</sup> Frances Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter in Occupied Hamburg, 1945-50* (PhD Diss: Columbia University, 2006)

<sup>79</sup> Leo Brawand, *Der Spiegel - ein Besatzungschild: Wie die Pressefreiheit nach Deutschland kam* (Hamburg: EVA Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2007)

<sup>80</sup> Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum Heimatlosen Ausländer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985)

## **Part I**

### **Physical reconstruction:**

#### **The military governors and army generals**

## **2 Bernard Montgomery, Brian Robertson and Alec Bishop: Creating order out of chaos and 'rebuilding civilisation': May 1945 – April 1946**

*'Out of the chaos and confusion which the war has inflicted on Europe  
we have to rebuild our European civilization.'*<sup>1</sup>

Historians have debated when and why British Policy changed after the end of the Second World War, from holding Germany down to 'putting Germany on its feet again.'<sup>2</sup> Was this due to 'a change of mood in Britain' in early 1947,<sup>3</sup> economic pressures in the winter of 1946,<sup>4</sup> or the emergence of the Cold War and the perceived threat from the Soviet Union, in which case, was the key turning point the Moscow Foreign Ministers' conference in April 1947,<sup>5</sup> the Paris conference a year earlier,<sup>6</sup> or perhaps the Berlin blockade in 1948? This chapter explores why three of the most important and influential members of British Military Government – the first Military Governor, Field-Marshal Montgomery, his deputy, Brian Robertson, and one of his senior generals, Alec Bishop – devoted so much time and energy to rebuilding a country they had so recently destroyed in battle. Based on an examination of what they aimed to achieve, as stated in contemporary documents such as instructions to subordinates and articles in the press and in their later memoirs, it would appear that in the British zone of occupation, the key turning point was none of the above, but the transition from war to peace from May to September 1945.<sup>7</sup>

In the first year of the occupation, the government in London was generally content to leave internal policy in the British Zone in the hands of the military, who were expected to act in

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<sup>1</sup> Imperial War Museum (henceforward IWM) Montgomery papers (henceforward BLM and LMD) BLM 85/7, speech by Montgomery on receiving the Freedom of the City of Antwerp, 7 June 1945

<sup>2</sup> For example John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War: The British and the Germans since 1890* (London: Little Brown, 2006), chapter 6, 'Putting poor Germany on its feet again', pp212-253

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p245

<sup>4</sup> John E. Farquharson, 'From Unity to Division: what prompted Britain to change its policy in Germany in 1946?' *European History Quarterly*, Vol.26, 1996, pp81-123

<sup>5</sup> Konrad Adenauer, *Memoirs 1945-53*, translated by Beate Ruhm von Oppen (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), Chapter 6, 'The Turning Point', pp89-106

<sup>6</sup> Anne Deighton, 'Cold-War Diplomacy: British Policy Towards Germany's Role in Europe, 1945-9' in Ian D. Turner (ed.), *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones 1945-1955* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1989), pp15-34

<sup>7</sup> This study follows Turner (ed.), *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany*, p8, and Kramer, *The West German Economy*, p223, in arguing that British military government policy and practice were both 'reconstructionist' from the start of the occupation. Different interpretations, based mainly on US sources, of a 'harsh occupation' or 'forced reorientation', have been presented in Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: from War to Peace* (London, New York, Sydney, Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2009), pp392-3 and Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

accordance with a set of directives issued by the War Office in October 1944.<sup>8</sup> When the new Labour government was formed in August 1945, there was uncertainty over which minister and Civil Service department would be responsible for the internal administration of the British Zone. This had previously been shared between the Foreign and War Offices.<sup>9</sup> After internal discussions in Whitehall, the new Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, decided that responsibility should be transferred to a new department, the Control Office for Germany and Austria (COGA), which would act as the liaison between Military Government in Germany and Civil Service departments in London.<sup>10</sup> However, at the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin's, request, it was agreed that that no formal announcement would be made until after the Allied Foreign Ministers' conference in the Autumn.<sup>11</sup> As a result, COGA was not established and the new minister for Germany, John Hynd, did not take up his post until October 1945.<sup>12</sup> The embryonic civilian Control Commission for Germany, which had been established in London in June 1944, transferred to Germany in July and August 1945.<sup>13</sup> It was gradually integrated with army 'Civil Affairs' staff by the end of the year, but Montgomery's three military Corps Commanders retained responsibility for civil administration at regional level until civilian Regional Commissioners were appointed in May 1946. For at least the first six months of the occupation, there was therefore no independent civilian authority established in Germany, and no clear reporting lines from Military Government back to London.<sup>14</sup>

Montgomery and his generals were left to govern an area half the size of the United Kingdom with a population of over twenty million. The directives issued in October 1944 did not provide guidance on many of the problems they had to face once victory had been achieved, such as food and housing shortages, chronically low levels of industrial production, massive population movements and, above all, the absence of any central

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<sup>8</sup> Montgomery's copy is in BLM 165/5. Ingrams' copy is in his papers at Churchill Archives Centre (henceforward IGMS) 1/8. Ulrich Reusch, *Deutsches Berufsbeamtentum und Britische Besatzung 1943-1947* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1985), p54, described these directives as 'undoubtedly the most important consolidated version of British planning for post-war Germany'.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government. Central Organisation and Planning* (London: HMSO, 1966), p110. Responsibility for Germany was transferred from the Foreign Office to the War Office on 1 June 1945, though both worked on various aspects of planning for the occupation. See Ulrich Reusch, 'Die Londoner Institutionen der britischen Deutschlandpolitik 1943-48. Eine behördengeschichtliche Untersuchung', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 100, (1980), pp374-5

<sup>10</sup> FO 371/46973, C5121-2, 'Prime Minister's meeting on machinery for Control Commission'

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Reusch, 'Die Londoner Institutionen'

<sup>13</sup> Donnison, *Civil Affairs, Central Organisation*, p109

<sup>14</sup> The government started to take a greater interest in internal affairs within the British Zone from late 1945, but this was at a low level until after Montgomery left Germany on 1 May 1946.

German authority. As a result, they adopted procedures they knew and understood from their experience in the army. The overall direction of policy was determined by Montgomery, as Military Governor and Commander-in-Chief, in a series of notes, memos and conferences with his senior staff. Responsibility for translating these into detailed directives and issuing instructions to subordinates lay with his Chief of Staff and Deputy Military Governor, Brian Robertson. Implementation was delegated to the army Corps Commanders and various Control Commission heads of division.

Although some British officers, soldiers and administrators were motivated by a desire to bring the perpetrators of war crimes to justice,<sup>15</sup> and others took advantage of the situation to indulge in theft and looting<sup>16</sup> or live a life of luxury,<sup>17</sup> soldiers were expected to obey orders. The predominant tone, which came from the top, was endorsed by senior officers and reflected in all the official publications, was that of reconstruction, from the start of the occupation. The views expressed by Montgomery, Robertson and Bishop described in this chapter were typical of the most senior ranks of army officers in Germany. These men knew each other personally, had a strong *esprit de corps* and often shared experiences, such as attendance at the army staff college at Camberley, overseas postings in the Empire and, in the Second World War, service in London as staff officers or under Montgomery's command in North Africa, France and Germany.

The similarities in outlook between Montgomery, Robertson and Bishop were greater than any differences. All were educated in public schools, fought as young men in the First World War, served in the Empire between the wars and held strong personal religious beliefs. After a brief outline of the personal background, previous experience and role in Military government of each, they are treated together in this chapter, as a representative group of three of the most senior army officers who determined and implemented Military Government policy in the British Zone.

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<sup>15</sup> E.g. Anthony Kemp, *The Secret Hunters* (London: Michael O'Mara Books Limited, 1986)

<sup>16</sup> Donnison, Civil Affairs and Military Government, North-West Europe, p212; Leonard O Mosley, *Report from Germany* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1945), pp45-46

<sup>17</sup> Goronwy Rees, *Sketches in Autobiography: 'A Bundle of Sensations' and 'A Chapter of Accidents' with 'A Winter in Berlin', a further autobiographical essay* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), edited with introduction and notes by John Harris, p123. Rees described one Corps Commander living 'like a renaissance prince'.

## 2.1 Classically educated soldiers in the service of the British Empire

*'Let us take as our motto a line written many centuries ago by wise friend Horace:*

*"Justum et tenacem propositi virum"<sup>18</sup>*

*(The just man, firm of purpose)*

### Field-Marshal Bernard Montgomery



Field-Marshal Montgomery<sup>19</sup>

Montgomery's year as Military Governor of Germany is rarely covered in any detail in his biographies.<sup>20</sup> He was born in 1887 in London, where his father was an Anglican clergyman and vicar of St Mark's, Kennington. Two years later, his father was appointed Bishop of Tasmania and moved there with his family, before returning to London in 1901, to become secretary of the Christian missionary Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> 'The Year of Genesis', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.8, 5 Jan. 1946, p1, initialled B.H.R. [Brian Robertson]

<sup>19</sup> Image from Wikipedia Commons [[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bernard\\_Law\\_Montgomery.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bernard_Law_Montgomery.jpg) accessed 20 Aug. 2012]

<sup>20</sup> Nigel Hamilton covered Montgomery's year in Germany in his 3 volume official biography, but made no reference to it in his *DNB* entry. Alan Moorehead, *Montgomery* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1946), Alun Chalfont, *Montgomery of Alamein* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976) and Colin Baxter, *Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery 1887-1976: A Selected Bibliography* (Westport, Connecticut, London, Greenwood Press, 1999) refer to it briefly.

<sup>21</sup> *Bishop Montgomery: a memoir*, (London: The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1933) [<http://anglicanhistory.org/england/hhmontgomery1933/> accessed 22 Aug. 2012]

On his return from Tasmania, aged 14, the future Field-Marshal went to St Paul's School in London, and spent his summer holidays at the family estate in Ireland. On leaving school, he entered the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst and was commissioned as an officer in 1908. After serving in India, he fought in the First World War and was wounded in France.<sup>22</sup> He commanded a battalion in the British Army of the Rhine during the first British occupation of Germany and after a chance meeting with the commander, Sir William Robertson, was successful in gaining entrance to the Staff College at Camberley in 1920.<sup>23</sup> He was stationed in Ireland during the fighting which led to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1923. In 1926 he was appointed as an instructor at the Staff College and subsequently served in Egypt, India and Palestine, being promoted to Major-General in 1938.<sup>24</sup>

At the outbreak of the Second World War, he was sent to France in command of a division of the British Expeditionary Force and took part in the retreat and evacuation at Dunkirk. Goronwy Rees, who acted as his liaison officer in 1941, later described him as having 'an air ... of extraordinary quietness and calm', more like a priest than a general.<sup>25</sup> In 1942 he was transferred to North Africa to command the 8<sup>th</sup> Army. After successfully holding the position at El Alamein, he counter-attacked in October 1942 and broke through the enemy lines. This was the first decisive Allied victory and considered by many in Britain to be the turning point in the war. It was followed by the retreat and evacuation of German forces from North Africa and the invasion of Italy in 1943. Montgomery returned to Britain and acted as Commander-in-Chief of all Allied ground forces, over two million British, US, Canadian and other troops, during Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy. Owing to the growing preponderance of American forces, he was replaced by General Eisenhower at the end of the campaign, but continued to command the Allied 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group in its advance through France, Belgium, and the Netherlands and across the Rhine into Germany. On 4 May 1945 he accepted the

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<sup>22</sup> Nigel Hamilton, 'Montgomery, Bernard Law [Monty], first Viscount Montgomery of Alamein (1887–1976)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2008 [<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/view/article/31460> accessed 22 August 2012] (henceforward Hamilton, 'Montgomery', *DNB*)

<sup>23</sup> Hamilton, 'Montgomery', *DNB*. Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson was the father of Brian Robertson. According to his memoirs, Montgomery entered the staff college in 1921 after failing to gain a place 1919 and 1920.

<sup>24</sup> Hamilton, 'Montgomery', *DNB*

<sup>25</sup> Goronwy Rees: *Sketches in Autobiography: 'A Bundle of Sensations' and 'A Chapter of Accidents' with 'A Winter in Berlin', a further autobiographical essay* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), edited with introduction and notes by John Harris. *A Bundle of Sensations* was first published by Chatto & Windus, London, 1960 and two extracts were serialised in *The Sunday Times* on 22 and 29 May 1960 as 'Monty' and the 'Drama of Dieppe'. According to John Harris: 'Reviewers of *A Bundle of Sensations* were much taken by Rees' pages on Monty and Nigel Hamilton agrees: "Anyone who ever served or worked with Montgomery will testify to the accuracy of this portrait."



unconditional surrender of all German forces in North-West Europe, shortly before the formal German surrender in Reims and Berlin on 8 and 9 May.<sup>26</sup>

He was appointed Military Governor of the British Zone of Germany and British member of the Allied Control Council on 22 May.<sup>27</sup> A year later, on 1 May 1946, he returned to England to take up the position of Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS). In later years he was part of the command structure for the Western European Union and NATO before retiring in 1958. In the same year he published his memoirs, which aroused considerable controversy, due to his criticism of other Allied commanders, including General Eisenhower. His military record has remained controversial, although he attracted tremendous loyalty from those who served under him and was often greeted by cheering crowds in the streets of Britain in the years immediately after the end of the war.<sup>28</sup> He was created Viscount Montgomery of Alamein in the 1946 New Year Honours and died in 1976, aged 88.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Hamilton, 'Montgomery', *DNB*

<sup>27</sup> BLM 85, 'Notes on the Occupation of Germany', Part 1

<sup>28</sup> Hamilton, 'Montgomery', *DNB*; Lieutenant-General Sir Brian Horrocks, *A Full Life* (London: Leo Cooper 1974) revised and extended edition, p284. First published by William Collins, 1960

<sup>29</sup> Hamilton, 'Montgomery', *DNB*

## Lieutenant-General Sir Brian Robertson



Portrait of General Robertson at the time of the Berlin Airlift<sup>30</sup>

Brian Robertson was born in 1896 at Simla in India. His father, Sir William Robertson, had a distinguished military career and was the only British soldier to rise from the ranks to field-marshal, the most senior position in the army. In 1915 his father was appointed Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), a position he held until 1918. From 1919-1920 he was Commander-in-Chief of the British Army of the Rhine, during the occupation of the Rhineland after the First World War.<sup>31</sup>

The family was not wealthy and, with no private means, Brian Robertson had to work hard to win a scholarship to Charterhouse.<sup>32</sup> He was reasonably content at school,<sup>33</sup> unlike his fellow pupil, the author and classical scholar Robert Graves, who wrote about his experiences in scathing terms in his autobiography *Goodbye to all That*.<sup>34</sup> At least one in three of their

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<sup>30</sup> Photograph from CAC, Albu papers, box 4, booklet prepared by the City of Berlin for presentation to Allied officers and men who took part in the Air Lift, p5

<sup>31</sup> Victor Bonham-Carter, *Soldier True: the Life and Times of Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson* (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1963)

<sup>32</sup> David Williamson, *A Most Diplomatic General: The life of General Lord Robertson of Oakridge* (London, Washington: Brassey's, 1996), p4

<sup>33</sup> Williamson, *A Most Diplomatic General*, p6. Robertson sent his son to Charterhouse in 1943.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960), p53. First published by Jonathan Cape 1929

generation at school died during the war.<sup>35</sup> In 1913 Robertson entered the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. At the outbreak of the First World War he was commissioned in the Royal Engineers but, owing to the influence of his father, did not fight at the front and had a relatively easy time as a staff officer and ADC, firstly to his father and subsequently to Generals Haig and Haking. After the war he spent five years in India, from 1920-25, and in 1926 gained a place at the Staff College in Camberley, where two of his fellow-students were the future generals Harold Alexander and Alec Bishop; Montgomery was one of the instructors. In 1928 he was appointed as an intelligence officer at the War Office and in 1932-3 was a member of the British delegation at the disarmament talks at Geneva.<sup>36</sup> In 1933 his father died and, uncertain of his future prospects in the army, he accepted a position in business with Dunlop and, a year later, moved to South Africa to manage a new tyre factory.<sup>37</sup>

When the Second World War broke out, he campaigned for South African support for the British war effort and volunteered to re-enlist. He served in the East African campaign and in May 1942 was appointed Quartermaster General for the 8<sup>th</sup> Army, during the retreat from Tobruk to El Alamein. He wrote to his wife in November, after the victory at the second battle of El Alamein, of the change he experienced when Montgomery was appointed Commander-in-Chief:

What gave me confidence, more than anything else was Monty's attitudes and methods. To watch him on his job is like watching a test match played after watching just good club performance.<sup>38</sup>

After the invasion of Italy in 1943 he was appointed Chief Administrative Officer to the Commander-in-Chief, General Alexander.<sup>39</sup> He was in Italy in July 1945, when he received an urgent summons to take over the position of Deputy Military Governor and Chief of Staff for Montgomery in Germany.<sup>40</sup> When Montgomery left Germany in May 1946, Robertson continued as deputy to his successor, Sholto Douglas, and when Douglas resigned in

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p54

<sup>36</sup> Williamson, *A Most Diplomatic General*

<sup>37</sup> Williamson, *A Most Diplomatic General*, p27; 'Profile General Robertson', *The Observer*, 8 Dec. 1946

<sup>38</sup> Williamson, *A Most Diplomatic General*, pp33-4, p46

<sup>39</sup> Charles Richardson, 'Robertson, Brian Hubert, first Baron Robertson of Oakridge (1896–1974)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006

[<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/catalogue/urls.lon.ac.uk/view/article/31616>, accessed 7 Aug 2009]

<sup>40</sup> Theodore A. Wilson, *Interview with General Lord Robertson of Oakridge*, (Harry S. Truman Library & Museum), 11 Aug. 1970 [[www.trumanlibrary.org/orahist/robertsn.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/orahist/robertsn.htm) accessed 7 August 2009], (henceforward Robertson, Truman presidential library interview)

November 1947, he was appointed Military Governor. Following the establishment of an independent elected government in West Germany in September 1949, he became the first British High Commissioner to the Federal Republic.<sup>41</sup>

He left Germany in June 1950 for a position as Commander-in-Chief Middle East land forces. He was disappointed not to follow in the footsteps of his father, when he was considered but not selected as Chief of the Imperial General Staff in 1953<sup>42</sup> and once again left the army for business, to become head of the British Transport Commission, a position he held until 1961. He died in 1974, aged 77.<sup>43</sup>

After Montgomery left Germany in May 1946, Robertson was the most influential soldier and administrator in the British Zone, chairing committee meetings, issuing instructions and directives, and acting as the spokesman for Military Government at press conferences.<sup>44</sup> He was a shy and private man, who often appeared reserved and aloof,<sup>45</sup> though it is clear from the official papers that he had a tremendous capacity for work. He described his role, in a brief he wrote in 1946 for the newly appointed civilian Regional Commissioners, as equivalent to the 'Prime Minister' of the Zone.<sup>46</sup> He developed a strong working relationship with Ernest Bevin,<sup>47</sup> the British Foreign Secretary, and with Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the German Federal Republic, who paid a tribute to him in his memoirs.<sup>48</sup> As an administrator, rather than commander, he would appear to have seen his primary responsibility as implementing policy agreed by others. However, as he said many years later in an interview for the Truman Presidential Library, when comparing himself to his US counterpart, Lucius D. Clay:

General Clay was a very powerful character. He was highly thought of in his own country ... I am not such a strong character, perhaps, but maybe I have a way of getting my own way. However it may be, it is certain that policy in Germany, in fact, emanated very largely from General Clay and myself.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Richardson, 'Robertson', *DNB*

<sup>42</sup> Williamson, *A Most Diplomatic General*, pp167-8

<sup>43</sup> Richardson, 'Robertson', *DNB*

<sup>44</sup> A 'Profile' of Robertson in *The Observer*, 8 Dec. 1946, stated that: 'There is no doubt that Robertson is the most powerful man in the British Control Commission.'

<sup>45</sup> Richardson, 'Robertson', *DNB*; Williamson, *A Most Diplomatic General*, p84

<sup>46</sup> FO 1030/308, paper on 'The Functions of Regional Commissioners', p1, enclosed with a letter from Robertson to the military commanders of the five regions in the British Zone, 29 April 1946

<sup>47</sup> Bishop, *Look back with Pleasure*, p105

<sup>48</sup> Adenauer, *Memoirs*, p274

<sup>49</sup> Robertson, Truman presidential library interview

Perhaps reflecting the classical training he received at Charterhouse,<sup>50</sup> he ended the second of two articles he wrote in early issues of the *British Zone Review*, the official journal of Military Government, by quoting a Latin verse by Horace, *Justum et tenacem propositi virum* (The just man, firm of purpose), adding that if his readers knew the poem and were still able to translate it, they would 'find that Horace wrote that Ode specially for the Control Commission in Germany.'<sup>51</sup> Two years later, at a press conference for journalists in 1947, he quoted the same line again, adding:

If you want to know what I think should be our attitude in Germany then I recommend to you to read those lines yourselves.<sup>52</sup>

His reference to a Latin verse, which he had probably learnt at school, suggests he was a man of firm principles, who believed they were self-evident to those who shared his background and education and there was no need to express them explicitly. In the twenty-first century, when very few civil servants, army officers, academics or journalists have studied Latin, or share his outlook on life as a classically educated army officer, what he assumed was obvious to all may not be so evident. His role and that of his colleagues deserve further historical investigation.

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<sup>50</sup> Graves, *Goodbye to all That*, p37, quoted a friend saying, in their final year at school: 'Do you realize that we have spent fourteen years of our lives principally at Latin and Greek?'

<sup>51</sup> *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.8, 5 Jan. 1946, p2. The full quotation from Horace is: *Justum et tenacem propositi virum / Non civium ardor prava iubentium / Non vultus instantis tyranni / Mente quatit solida*, 'The just man, firm of purpose cannot be shaken in his rocklike soul, by the heat of fellow citizens clamouring for what is wrong, nor by the presence of a threatening tyrant' (my translation).

<sup>52</sup> IWM, Bishop papers, (henceforward AB), AB12

## Major-General Sir Alec Bishop



Alexander Bishop, by Walter Stoneman, 1945 © National Portrait Gallery

Alec Bishop was born in 1897 in a small village near Plymouth, Devon. In his unpublished autobiography, he wrote that his father had not served in the army, but 'most of my forbears on my Mother's side had been soldiers' dating back to the 'Parliamentary Wars of the seventeenth century' and it was assumed that he too 'would follow the profession of arms.'<sup>53</sup>

He went to school at Plymouth College and in the Autumn of 1914 gained a scholarship to Sandhurst. Two years later he was sent to Mesopotamia, in charge of a draft of 500 men. In January 1917 he took part in the offensive which was to lead to the capture of Baghdad on 17 March. He was lightly wounded in action after an engagement in which his senior officer was killed and he took over command. After three weeks in hospital he re-joined his regiment and again took over command of the company. He was still only 19 years old.<sup>54</sup>

After the war he spent six years in India, where 'The big game shooting was first class, and included tiger, bison, wild boar, sambhur, cheetah and spotted deer.... Life was very

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<sup>53</sup> AB1, Alec Bishop, *Look Back with Pleasure*, (Beckley, Sussex: unpublished, 1971), p3

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, pp14-15

pleasant in those days for young officers serving in India. We were in fact a very privileged body of young men.<sup>55</sup> He returned to England in 1925 and after a brief move to Yorkshire at the time of the General Strike, in case of 'an emergency' in the coalfields,<sup>56</sup> gained a place at the Staff College at Camberley in 1926.<sup>57</sup>

In 1931 he joined the Colonial Office in London and travelled extensively in Africa on tours of inspection of the Colonial Forces. At the outbreak of the Second World War he was in Tanganyika, where he organised the arrest of German settlers, in response to concerns that they would 'form themselves into commandos and take to the bush.'<sup>58</sup> He spent the rest of the war in various positions in Africa and as a staff officer at the War Office in London where he was appointed Director of Quartering in 1944, with the rank of Major-General.<sup>59</sup> For the last three months of the war, he was Deputy Director of the Political Warfare Executive, (PWE), deputising for the director, Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, who was ill at the time. Presumably this led to him taking charge of Information Services in Germany. Apparently he had no choice in the matter, as his appointment was negotiated between Bruce Lockhart and Sir William Strang, political adviser to Montgomery.<sup>60</sup> Bishop moved to Germany in June 1945, one month after the end of the war. After a year as Head of Information Services and Public Relations, he was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff to Robertson and two years later Regional Commissioner for North Rhine-Westphalia.

Although not as senior or influential as Montgomery or Robertson, Bishop's career is interesting and relevant for a study of British aims in occupied Germany. In the first year after the end of the war he had overall responsibility for communicating the work done by British Military Government internally to its own staff, and externally to those at home in Britain and to the local German population. In addition, unlike many other senior officers, he served in Germany for an extended period of five and a half years and his work spanned three important areas of administration: public relations and information services; general policy;

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p30

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p31. Bishop's use of the term 'emergency' when referring to the General Strike of 1926 is significant, as the same term is often used as a euphemism for a colonial insurrection, e.g. 'Malayan Emergency', 'Aden Emergency'.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p32

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p59

<sup>59</sup> *Who's Who 1983*, (London: A&C Black, 1983), p198

<sup>60</sup> Bishop, *Look Back with Pleasure*, p88

and the administration of North Rhine-Westphalia, the largest and most industrialised *Land*,<sup>61</sup> or region, in the Zone.

Bishop left Germany on New Year's Eve 1950 to take up a position as Assistant Secretary at the Commonwealth Relations Office. From 1957-62 he was the British Deputy High Commissioner in Calcutta. After another brief period at the Commonwealth Relations Office, he was appointed High Commissioner for Cyprus in 1964, but had to retire due to ill-health a year later. He died in 1984.<sup>62</sup>

## 2.2 'Almost overnight': The transition from war to peace

*'The British forces, which had hitherto been locked in mortal combat with their German opponents, turned almost overnight the whole of their energies, strength and enthusiasm into the physical reconstruction of the country, in which they were serving.'*<sup>63</sup>

In his memoirs, Montgomery described the situation in Germany following the unconditional surrender on 8 May 1945:

The immediate problem that now faced us was terrific. We had in our area nearly one and a half million German prisoners of war. There were a further one million German wounded, without medical supplies, and in particular with a shortage of bandages and no anaesthetics. In addition, there were about one million civilian refugees who had fled into our area from the advancing Russians; these and 'Displaced Persons' were roaming about the country, often looting as they went. Transportation and communication services had ceased to function. Agriculture and industry were largely at a standstill. Food was scarce and there was a serious risk of famine and disease during the coming months. And to crown it all there was no central government in being, and the machinery whereby a central government could function no longer existed.

Here was a pretty pickle.

I was a soldier and I had not been trained to handle anything of this nature.

However, something had to be done, and done quickly.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> The German terms *Land* and its plural *Länder* refer to the self-governing regions in Germany, formed by the Allies from the Prussian provinces and former (pre-1871) independent states, which together comprise the Federal Republic of Germany.

<sup>62</sup> IWM catalogue entry for the papers of Major-General Sir Alec Bishop.

<sup>63</sup> AB3, handwritten draft of speech by Bishop at the Anglo-German Association dinner, 2 Nov. 1954

<sup>64</sup> Montgomery, *Memoirs*, p345



He flew to London on 14 May to meet the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, and argue the case for urgent action. Though he was frustrated by delays, his appointment as Military Governor and Commander in Chief of the British armed forces in Germany was confirmed on 22 May.<sup>65</sup> The next day he addressed Control Commission staff in London and said: 'Between us we have to re-establish civil control, and to govern, a country which we have conquered and which has become sadly battered in the process.' His official biographer, Nigel Hamilton, commented that: 'Monty's sympathy with the plight of Germany came as a shock to those in the auditorium who pictured him as a ruthless, Cromwellian commander, until two weeks ago waging implacable war upon the Nazis.'<sup>66</sup>

Montgomery's memoirs and similar accounts by Robertson, Bishop and other generals such as Brian Horrocks, of a rapid change in policy, 'almost overnight',<sup>67</sup> may have reflected prevailing attitudes in the 1950s and 1960s at the height of the Cold War, but the change can also be traced in contemporary documents, such as a series of Information Control policy directives issued by British Army Headquarters in Germany. Directive no. 1, dated 12 May 1945, a few days after VE Day, adopted a harsh tone, instructing staff to emphasise issues such as: 'The completeness of Germany's defeat in the field ... The common responsibility of all Germans for Nazi crimes' and 'The power and determination of the Allies to enforce their will.'<sup>68</sup> In this respect the directive was similar to orders issued before the end of the war, such as Montgomery's first message on non-fraternization, in March 1945, instructing British troops to 'keep clear of Germans, man, woman, and child' and not to:

walk out with them, or shake hands, or visit their homes, or make them gifts, or take gifts from them. You must not play games with them or share any social event with them. In short you must not fraternise with Germans at all.<sup>69</sup>

There was no change in the second directive, but the third, issued only two weeks later, on 27 May, stated that whilst earlier themes remained valid, 'the emphasis should now be shifted to more positive aims':

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<sup>65</sup> BLM 85, 'Notes on the Occupation of Germany', Part 1

<sup>66</sup> Nigel Hamilton, *Monty: The Field-Marshal 1944-1976* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), p541

<sup>67</sup> Robertson, Truman presidential library interview; AB3, speech by Bishop at the Anglo-German Association dinner, 2 Nov. 1954; Horrocks, *A Full Life*, p268. Horrocks was one of Montgomery's three Corps Commanders.

<sup>68</sup> FO 1005/739, 'Infm Control Policy Directive No. 1', 12 May 1945

<sup>69</sup> BLM 85/10

The immediate need, from both Allied and German points of view, is for a supreme effort by the Germans at all forms of reconstruction work ... Use every opportunity that honest reporting allows to emphasise with good space and prominence reconstruction activities by both the Allies and the Germans.<sup>70</sup>

Montgomery returned to Germany as Military Governor on 26 May, the day before the third directive was issued. Although there is no specific evidence in the file, it is likely that the change reflected new instructions from above, ultimately emanating from him. The fourth directive, issued on 8 June, stated that the 'predominantly negative attitude' specified in the first directive was now superseded.<sup>71</sup> Subsequent directives and memos, such as Montgomery's three 'Notes on the present situation'<sup>72</sup> and his third 'personal message' to the German people,<sup>73</sup> all emphasised the need for a new policy of reconstruction and of giving the Germans 'hope for the future.'<sup>74</sup>

#### **'You have to see it to believe it'**

In common with many of their colleagues, Montgomery, Robertson and Bishop were surprised and shocked at the extent of the physical destruction of Germany. Numerous published accounts, by British soldiers, administrators, diplomats and journalists, included descriptions of the devastation they saw when they first arrived in Germany, looking out of aeroplane or train windows, or driving through the streets of one of the cities.<sup>75</sup> General Templer,<sup>76</sup> for example, described his first impressions of 'The Early Days', in an article in the *British Zone Review* in November 1945.

Military Government was met by chaos. A team of four officers and six other ranks would be confronted by an area of many square miles. There was no local authority whatever with whom to deal. Devastation was often on a prodigious scale. There were no communications, no power. Fields were deserted. Crops and cattle had been left

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<sup>70</sup> FO 1005/739, 'Infm Control Policy Directive No. 3', 27 May 1945

<sup>71</sup> FO 1005/739, 'Infm Control Policy Directive No. 4', 8 June 1945

<sup>72</sup> BLM 85/15

<sup>73</sup> BLM 85/4, LMD 143/6-7

<sup>74</sup> FO 1005/739, 'Infm Control Policy Directive No. 9', 18 July 1945, restated instructions given a few days earlier that: 'Attitude of all output should now be more positive. Every fact should be emphasised which may inspire hope for the future in Germany.'

<sup>75</sup> Many contemporary accounts by British observers referred to their first impressions of devastation, including those listed in the bibliography by Alec Cairncross, George Clare, Yvone Kirkpatrick, Fenner Brockway, Noel Annan, William Strang, Ethel Mannin, and Lieutenant-Colonel Byford-Jones. See also 'Passing Comment', *British Zone Review*, Vol. 1, No. 20, 22 June 1946, p1.

John Gimbel, *The American Occupation of Germany: Politics and the Military, 1945-1949* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1968), p6, quoted similar accounts by US observers including President Truman, General Clay and journalists Walter Millis and Joseph Barnes.

<sup>76</sup> Director of Civil Affairs for 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group and later Deputy Chief of Staff to Montgomery, responsible for internal administration of the British Zone in the first year of the occupation.

unattended. Half the population had been evacuated eastwards. Those that remained were stunned and cowed. Everything was at a standstill.<sup>77</sup>

Bishop described his first impressions in similar terms in his memoirs:

It is very difficult for anyone who did not see the situation in Germany when the war came to an end to realise what it was like. The first impression was of the appalling destruction which had been caused by the Allies' bombing. Very few towns had escaped wide-spread destruction. In some of the Ruhr towns such as Duisburg, over eighty per cent of the buildings had been reduced to rubble, under which lay the bodies of thousands of casualties.<sup>78</sup>

The majority of senior officers were completely unprepared for their new role as civil administrators of a defeated enemy country. Bishop had no choice in his selection as Head of Public Relations and Information Services Control. Robertson described his recall from Italy, when his predecessor as Montgomery's deputy in Germany, General Weeks, retired due to ill-health after only two months in post:

I was suddenly sent for. I was told to take over this job, and I went to Germany the next day. I didn't speak a word of German; I'd never been in the country before. I had been in South Africa for half a dozen years or more. I knew nothing about the situation at all, nothing, nor had I taken any part of the great preparatory work that had been carried forward in London.<sup>79</sup>

If the generals felt unprepared for their new roles, they nevertheless believed they knew more than the politicians. In 1965, in a speech to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Robertson told the audience that, at the end of the war, Churchill, Roosevelt and other politicians in Britain and the United States had 'an entirely false picture in their minds as to what the situation would be in Germany, and they were aiming at a completely wrong objective.'<sup>80</sup> The 'misconception in the mind of President Franklin Roosevelt', he believed, 'dominated American thought and action during the first two, very important years following the German collapse.'

The 'Grand Design' of President Roosevelt for the future peace of the world was based upon a United Nations dominated by an American-Russian partnership, and this probably to

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<sup>77</sup> 'The Early Days', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.4, November 1945, p1, initialled G.W.R.T.

<sup>78</sup> Bishop, *Look Back with Pleasure*, p88

<sup>79</sup> Robertson, Truman presidential library interview; see also TNA WO 258/83

<sup>80</sup> Brian Robertson, Lord Robertson of Oakridge, 'A Miracle? Potsdam 1945 – Western Germany 1965', *International Affairs*, Vol.41, No.3, (1965), pp401-410

the exclusion of close friendship with Great Britain. With this concept went a stern policy towards Germany.<sup>81</sup>

British attitudes, Robertson continued, were different. When he arrived in Germany in July 1945, he found the 'men on the spot' including Montgomery and Templer, 'had their minds on other things':

Very soon I could see that the assumptions on which our policy had been based were false, and that the objectives chosen were quite irrelevant. The real menace for the future of Europe and to world peace was not Germany, but Russia. The immediate objective was not to batter Germany down – she was sprawling in the dust already – but to build her up and to do so wisely. We had to save Germany physically from starvation, squalor and penury, spiritually from despair and Communism.<sup>82</sup>

Twenty years earlier, in October 1945, in an article for the *British Zone Review*, he had expressed a slightly different perspective.<sup>83</sup> Rather than referring to a threat from Russia and Communism, he justified a policy of reconstruction on the need for reform within Germany. He acknowledged the need for disarmament and de-nazification, but considered these 'relatively straightforward' and already largely completed following unconditional surrender and military occupation. He told his colleagues in Military Government that they now needed to focus on the more positive aspects of their work, which he believed was not just a matter of physical or economic reconstruction, but more like educating a child.<sup>84</sup> Bishop made a similar point in an article in the *British Zone Review* in January 1946 on 'Re-educating Germany', emphasising the scale of the task, but concluding with the view that it was difficult but not impossible to achieve as: 'During the war years we have learnt that nothing is impossible, though perhaps an "impossible task" may take a little longer to accomplish.'<sup>85</sup>

In summary, Montgomery, Robertson and Bishop, three of the most influential men in the British Zone of occupied Germany, were career officers, with little if any experience of civilian administration, no knowledge of the German language, culture or society, had played no part in British post-war planning and preparation for the occupation and felt unprepared for the job they were expected to perform. Nevertheless, their first impressions, when they arrived in

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

<sup>83</sup> 'Quo Vadis?' *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.3, 27 Oct. 1946, p1, initialled B.H.R.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup> 'Re-educating Germany', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.6, 8 Dec. 1945, pp3-4, initialled W.H.A.B.

Germany, of a devastated country and a demoralised people, led them to conclude that the politicians at home knew even less than they did. They were in no doubt of the need for complete disarmament and denazification as agreed at the Potsdam conference, but they also assumed it was part of their duty and personal responsibility to rehabilitate Germany and, great as the task was, they believed they knew, or could learn, what had to be done to achieve this.

### **'First things first'**

The unquestioned assumption of all three men, Montgomery, Robertson and Bishop, was that their most urgent tasks in Germany were to restore law and order, prevent starvation, guard against the spread of disease, find shelter for the homeless, keep young people off the streets and start to rebuild the economy.

Montgomery, as Commander-in-Chief and Military Governor, had no confidence in the ability of the civilian Control Commission to deal with the problems on the ground, as they were based in London until July and August, and 'out of touch with the immediate realities of the situation.'<sup>86</sup> He therefore decided to make use of the army and treat the work that needed to be done as if it were a military operation.<sup>87</sup> The battles he and his troops had fought to win the war were followed by another to win the peace, which he called 'The Battle of the Winter', the objectives of which were not to repel enemy attack or win territory, but to provide 'food, work and homes.'<sup>88</sup> Operations 'Overlord' (the invasion of Normandy), 'Market Garden' (the attack on Arnhem described in the film 'A Bridge too Far') and 'Plunder' (the final assault across the German border to the Rhine) were followed, after the end of the war, by Operations 'Barleycorn' (the release of captured German POWs to work on the land and help bring in the harvest), 'Coalscuttle' (a further release of POWs to work in the coalmines of the Ruhr) and 'Stork' (the evacuation of young children from the British Zone in Berlin).<sup>89</sup>

The role of British Military Government was described by Robertson in his first article in the *British Zone Review* as similar to that of a policeman taking control at the scene of an

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<sup>86</sup> BLM 86, 'Notes on the Occupation of Germany', part 2, p8

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> BLM 85/15, 'Notes on the Present Situation', 6 July 1945; *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.1, p2

<sup>89</sup> *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.1, 29 Sept. 1945, p13; Vol.1, No.4, 10 Nov. 1945, p7

accident. He told the story of a horse and cart careering down a street, overturning and causing chaos, when:

Into this crowd came a British Military Policeman who immediately took charge of the situation. He was not an expert in horses and carts, but he saw very clearly that certain essential things were to be done.

This is a simple story. We have all seen things like this happen. It has a moral for us. The German apple-cart has been upset, the madmen who were in charge of it are dead or in prison, the German people lies bleeding and helpless. We represent the policeman destined to take charge of the proceedings.<sup>90</sup>

In a second article, published in January 1946, he wrote in similar terms of the need for improvisation and the application of common sense, in unexpected conditions:

The directives were not many, and much was left to the initiative of individuals ... The detachments entered into a land of desolation and bewilderment. Government above the level of the parish council had ceased. Everything was in disorder; people were stunned and helpless.... 'First things first' was the motto when Military Government first raised its sign in Germany...<sup>91</sup>

Initial concerns that they might have to deal with resistance from units of the German army who refused to surrender, die-hard Nazis or German nationalists, turned out to be completely unfounded. Montgomery reported in a memorandum to Sir Arthur Street, Permanent Secretary of the Control Office in London, that: 'The British Zone has remained quiet. So far scarcely a spark has occurred. I do not think we shall have any trouble with the Germans this winter; they are fully occupied with their own immediate troubles.'<sup>92</sup>

According to contemporary accounts, crime committed by Displaced Persons, or 'DPs', as the millions of liberated slave workers in Nazi Germany, were known, was a greater problem than resistance from Germans.<sup>93</sup> There was considerable sympathy among British officers for DPs as victims of the Nazi regime, but their priority was the enforcement of law and order, not humanitarian concerns, and crimes had to be punished, whoever committed them.

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<sup>90</sup> 'Quo Vadis?' *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.3, 27 Oct. 1946, p1

<sup>91</sup> 'The Year of Genesis', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.8, 5 Jan. 1946, p1

<sup>92</sup> BLM 87/23, memorandum to the Permanent Secretary, COGA, 19 Dec. 1945

<sup>93</sup> This study discusses the issue from the point of view of the British Military authorities. Visiting British journalists described the issue in similar terms, e.g. Leonard O Mosley, *Report from Germany* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1945), p57, p78. From the point of view of the Displaced Persons the situation appeared quite different. See, for example, Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, 'The Displaced Persons Problem: Repatriation and Resettlement' in Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth (eds.), *European Immigrants in Britain 1933-1950*, (Munich: K.G. Saur, 2003), pp137-149.

Bishop expressed this ambivalence in his memoirs: 'We all felt great sympathy for these unfortunate people who had suffered so much ... Many were well educated and responsible, others were unruly and lawless.'<sup>94</sup> In an address to the Newspaper Society in October 1945, Montgomery made it clear that, whatever their personal sympathies, murder, rape, looting and the illegal possession of firearms would not be tolerated.<sup>95</sup> In a conference for Corps Commanders in August, he had been more explicit, giving instructions that:

Present looting and murder by Poles and Russian DPs must be stopped by ruthless means. Soldiers must shoot to kill.<sup>96</sup>

The German police, forbidden to carry firearms after the end of the war, were unable to prevent crime by armed DPs. British junior officers on the front line, responsible for enforcing law and order, soon found their sympathies lay increasingly with the local German population and came to share the Germans' perception of DPs as lawless troublemakers.<sup>97</sup>

### **Food: 'A Buchenwald in Germany'**

In a telegram to Montgomery sent on 5 June 1945, the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, wrote that:

I am alarmed by the winter prospect in Germany. I expect they will do everything you tell them and hold you responsible that they are fed. I wonder myself whether anything but German responsibility can secure the full German effort. It would NOT be thought a good ending to the war if you had a Buchenwald in Germany this winter with millions instead of thousands dying.<sup>98</sup>

With hindsight, we know that Churchill's understanding of the numbers was wrong. Millions of people rather than thousands died in the Holocaust, and thousands, rather than millions, died of starvation and disease in the British Zone after the end of the war. However, at the time, famine and mass deaths from starvation in Germany and Europe, as had occurred

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<sup>94</sup> Bishop, *Look Back with Pleasure*, pp125-7

<sup>95</sup> BLM 86/18, Address to the Newspaper Society, 2 Oct. 1945

<sup>96</sup> BLM 86/3, 'Notes of Corps Commanders Conference', 2 Aug. 1945

<sup>97</sup> M.E. Pelly and H.J. Yasamee (eds.) assisted by G.Bennett, *Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series 1*, Volume 5, Germany and Western Europe, 11 August - 31 December 1945 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1990), pp44-5, Memo from Strang to Harvey, 16 August 1945, including report by Noel Annan on Displaced Persons. See chapter 7 below, pp234ff, for further discussion of junior officers' attitudes to DPs.

<sup>98</sup> BLM 164/2, copy of telegram from Churchill to Montgomery, undated. Montgomery's reply was sent on 5 June 1945

during and after the First World War,<sup>99</sup> seemed a very real possibility. Before he left London in March 1945, General Templer was told by P.J. Grigg, Secretary of State for War, that:

You must resign yourself to the fact that two million are going to die of hunger in Europe this spring. You and the Army must do all you can to mitigate it, but you won't be able to cure it.<sup>100</sup>

For three years after the end of the war, food rations in the British Zone for the so-called 'normal consumer' varied between around 1,000 and 1,500 calories per day, well below the League of Nations' estimate of 2,000 calories as the minimum required to support a working adult. In comparison, the normal British ration at the time was around 2,800 calories.<sup>101</sup>

For the first three years of the occupation, food was the single most important issue for the British authorities.<sup>102</sup> At its simplest, their policy could be reduced to the question of what actions had to be taken to prevent starvation. Economic reconstruction could not proceed unless the workers were adequately fed; attempts at democratic political and social reform were pointless if all people could think about was their next meal. For example, a cut in rations in early 1946 resulted in an immediate reduction in coal production from 181,000 to 160,000 tons per day.<sup>103</sup> Absenteeism was high as workers took time off on 'hamster' visits to the countryside to try to find food for themselves and their families.<sup>104</sup> During the cold winter of 1946-7 the entire economy ground to a halt and factories, such as the Volkswagen works, ceased production for 3 months.<sup>105</sup>

A series of short term measures alleviated the problem without solving it: the use of Allied stocks of food held in reserve following the invasion in 1944, the diversion of supplies from the US, the reduction of stocks of wheat held in Britain and attempts to increase production within the British Zone. The fundamental problem was that food production within the Western Zones, and the British Zone in particular, was not sufficient to feed the population,

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<sup>99</sup> <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/spotlights/blockade.htm> accessed 10 April 2013

<sup>100</sup> Donnison, *Civil Affairs, North-West Europe*, pxiii. Also quoted in John Cloake, *Templer: Tiger of Malaya: The Life of Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer* (London: Harrap, 1985), p149

<sup>101</sup> Kramer, *The West German Economy*, pp74-6

<sup>102</sup> Günter J. Tittel, *Hunger und Politik: Die Ernährungskrise in der Bizone (1945-1949)*, (Frankfurt & New York: Campus Verlag, 1990); John E. Farquharson, *The Western Allies and the Politics of Food, Agrarian Management in Postwar Germany* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1985); Michael Wildt, *Der Traum vom Sattwerden; Hunger und Protest, Schwarzmarkt und Selbsthilfe in Hamburg 1945-1948* (Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 1986)

<sup>103</sup> Kramer, *The West German Economy*, p81, p97. See also FO 1030/303, memo from Robertson to Street, 26 March 1946, headed 'Coal'.

<sup>104</sup> 'Less Food, Less Coal', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.15, 13 April 1946, p1

<sup>105</sup> Ian Turner, 'Das Volkswagenwerk – ein deutsches Unternehmen unter britische Kontrolle' in Josef Foschepoth & Rolf Steininger (eds.), *Britische Deutschland- und Besatzungspolitik* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1985), p299



and until, and unless, industry revived, there was no revenue from exports to pay for food imports. The British Government was therefore faced with the choice of reducing rations further, paying for food imports with scarce foreign currency or, as eventually happened but not until 1948, persuading the US to assume financial responsibility for maintaining the British as well as their own Zone.<sup>106</sup>

During this period, but especially in the eight months from October 1945 to May 1946, Montgomery and Robertson fought a continual battle with government ministers in London to maintain supplies of food above what they considered to be starvation level. In October 1945 Robertson sent an urgent request for additional wheat allocations to the War Office. The existing 1,550 calorie ration was already inadequate, he wrote, as '2,000 calories is the minimum ration to prevent disease and unrest.' Only 27,000 tons per week were available from the German harvest against a requirement of 61,500 tons.<sup>107</sup> On 24 October Montgomery met Bevin during a visit to London. On his return to Germany, he restated his position in a telegram, saying that he had learned that the government were considering delaying further supplies. The 'already inadequate' ration of 1,550 calories would have to be reduced by 40% and this, he continued, would mean 'famine conditions to an extent which no civilized people should inflict upon their beaten enemies.'<sup>108</sup>

On 26 February the following year, the matter had still not been resolved. Montgomery wrote to John Hynd, the minister responsible for Germany in London, to say he would have to cut the ration, with dire consequences:

I have just returned from Switzerland and am utterly shocked by the latest telegrams from the Control Office regarding food supplies to the British Zone....

I have therefore ordered an immediate reduction of the ration by 33 1/3% for the normal consumer. This means a ration of 1000 calories for the normal consumer which is well below the hunger mark....

In my opinion we must immediately have substantial imports of wheat or equivalent for Germany. If we do not do so we shall produce death and misery to an extent which will

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<sup>106</sup> Farquharson, *The Western Allies and the Politics of Food*

<sup>107</sup> Pelly and Yasamee, *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, pp242-245, 'Urgent request for wheat allocations'

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, note 7

disgrace our administration in history and completely stultify every effort which we are making to produce a democratic Germany.<sup>109</sup>

On 5 May Robertson wrote again to Street, enclosing a strongly worded paper on the food situation. The 1,000 calorie ration had been introduced in March but, he added: 'It is not possible for an adult human being to subsist on 1,000 calories...' If there were no further imports, food grains would run out by 27 May and rations would be reduced to 450 calories: 'Coal production will stop. The trains will stop. The lights will go out.'<sup>110</sup>

With the introduction of bread rationing in Britain on 21 July 1946, and agreement to allocate an additional 200,000 tons of US wheat to the British Zone, the situation eased, but rations in Germany continued at a low level and did not exceed 1,500 calories until after the introduction of Marshall Aid in the second half of 1948. In October 1946 an American dockers' strike brought food shipments almost to a standstill. In the Spring of 1947, after rations were reduced to 750 calories in the Ruhr, there was a string of hunger strikes and demonstrations. Conditions did not improve until 1948-9, following substantial increases in US aid and food imports.<sup>111</sup>

#### **'Epidemics need no Passports' – disease and communism**

Montgomery and his officers in Germany believed that the restoration of law and order, the provision of enough food to prevent starvation and economic reconstruction to provide a reasonable standard of living were necessary, not only to help the German people, but because it was in their own interest to prevent disease and social unrest spreading from Germany to the rest of Western Europe.<sup>112</sup> A precedent which concerned them greatly was the epidemic of influenza at the end of the First World War, which was widely believed to have killed more people than the war itself.<sup>113</sup> Unlike enemy armies, disease could not be stopped by physical barriers.<sup>114</sup> A starving population was more susceptible to disease and 'epidemics need no passports,' as the author of an article in the *British Zone Review* wrote in

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<sup>109</sup> BLM 170/10, message from Montgomery to Hynd, 26 Feb. 1946

<sup>110</sup> FO 1030/303, letter from Robertson to Street, 5 May 1946

<sup>111</sup> Kramer, *The West German Economy*, pp73-84

<sup>112</sup> IWM BLM 86/19, address to the Newspaper Society, 2 Oct. 1945

<sup>113</sup> Ibid; Farquharson, *The Western Allies and the Politics of Food*, p90, citing a speech by Ernest Bevin, *HC Deb 26 October 1945 vol 414 c2375*; Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and violence through the German dictatorships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p60, citing Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p39

<sup>114</sup> E.g. Bevin told Parliament on 26 Oct. 1945 that: '... while the Channel could be used to stop Germans, it cannot stop germs. You cannot limit the devastation of an epidemic by a frontier or a strategic post.'

September 1945.<sup>115</sup> Alec Bishop made a similar point in his memoirs after describing conditions in Germany at the end of the war:

Without vigorous help and support it was inevitable that epidemics would spread throughout the country, endangering the health of the Occupying Forces and of the whole of Western Europe.

He continued by saying:

It was also clear that unless the German people were helped to transform the conditions then existing into a situation which would provide a bearable if modest standard of living it would be impossible to prevent the spread of communism throughout the whole country.<sup>116</sup>

British anti-communism pre-dated the Cold War and was not new in 1945. The idea that communism was a 'disease of the mind' had been widespread among Conservative Party politicians and the popular press since the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

In a recent article on 'The Creeds of the Devil', Antoine Capet provided numerous examples of Churchill's use of medical imagery between the wars, describing the 'menace of Bolshevism' as 'the poisoned peril' or 'a plague bacillus' infecting civilisation.<sup>117</sup> In the following passage, published in 1929 but based on a newspaper article written in 1920, Churchill graphically linked the geographical country of Russia with the triple threat of war, disease and ideology:

[To the East of Poland] lay the huge mass of Russia—not a wounded Russia only, but a poisoned Russia, an infected Russia, a plague-bearing Russia, a Russia of armed hordes not only smiting with bayonet and with cannon, but accompanied and preceded by swarms of typhus-bearing vermin which slew the bodies of men, and political doctrines which destroyed the health and even the souls of nations.<sup>118</sup>

The emotional connection between war, disease and political doctrines could appear equally relevant in 1945. Between 1918 and 1922 an estimated three million people died in Russia

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<sup>115</sup> 'Will Germany Starve this Winter: the Problem of Feeding the British Zone', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.1, 29 Sept. 1945, p3

<sup>116</sup> Bishop, *Look Back with Pleasure*, p89

<sup>117</sup> Antoine Capet, "'The Creeds of the Devil' Churchill between the Two Totalitarianisms, 1917 – 1945", *Finest Hour Online*, 31 August 2009

[<http://www.winstonchurchill.org/support/the-churchill-centre/publications/finest-hour-online/725-the-creeds-of-the-devil-churchill-between-the-two-totalitarianisms-1917-1945> accessed 26 September 2009]

<sup>118</sup> Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis*, 6 vols., (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1923-31. Abridged Edition, London : Penguin, 2007), Vol. IV, The Aftermath, quoted in Capet, 'The Creeds of the Devil'

from typhus, a highly infectious disease spread by the human body louse.<sup>119</sup> Outbreaks of typhus were widespread in Germany in 1945 and were controlled by the Allies only by routinely dusting with DDT anyone suspected of being a source of infection, regardless of their nationality or status.<sup>120</sup>

Capet does not agree with some revisionist historians, who have claimed that Churchill's greatest lifetime struggle was against a 'Bolshevist' Soviet Union and its communist allies, rather than against the fascist dictatorships of Germany, Italy and Japan,<sup>121</sup> arguing that whereas he was convinced that Nazi Germany had to be destroyed, Churchill eventually came to terms with the existence of Soviet Russia, however much he disliked it. However, once Nazi Germany had been defeated in 1945, it was easy for Churchill to revert to the role of anti-communist crusader and claim that he had always been consistent in his views. He had, after all, proposed to the War Cabinet on the eve of the Armistice in 1918 that '[We] might have to build up the German army, as it was important to get Germany on its legs again for fear of the spread of Bolshevism,' and told Lloyd George in April 1919 that their policy should be to 'Feed Germany; fight Bolshevism; make Germany fight Bolshevism.'<sup>122</sup>

Lloyd George famously remarked of Churchill: 'His ducal blood revolted against the wholesale elimination of Grand Dukes in Russia.'<sup>123</sup> Similarly, as army officers and privileged members of the British professional establishment, Montgomery, Robertson and Bishop spent their working lives defending Britain's position in the world and any threat to it, whether from Nazi Germany, Communist Russia, or elsewhere, affected them personally. For all three in 1945, as for Churchill in 1919, starvation, disease, communism and social unrest were four aspects of the same problem, which could be summarised as a breakdown of the established social order and the need to 'rebuild civilisation', as they understood it. Nazi Germany had been destroyed, but the other threats remained. As Montgomery said in June 1945 in a speech on receiving the freedom of the City of Antwerp, echoing Churchill in his reference to 'toil and sweat':

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<sup>119</sup> Joseph M. Conlon, 'The Historical Impact of Epidemic Typhus', <http://entomology.montana.edu/historybug/TYPHUS-Conlon.pdf> accessed 26 August 2009]

<sup>120</sup> Ibid; Jessica Reinisch, *Public Health in Germany under Soviet and Allied Occupation, 1943-1947* (PhD Diss: London, 2004), p373

<sup>121</sup> David Carlton, 'Churchill and the Two Evil Empires', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Sixth Series)*, Vol.11, 2001, pp331-351

<sup>122</sup> Quoted in Capet, 'Creeds of the Devil'

<sup>123</sup> Ibid

Our first task is now ended. Together we have won the war, and have destroyed the Nazi tyranny of Europe. Our hardest task remains to be tackled. Out of the chaos and confusion which the war has inflicted on Europe we have to rebuild our European civilisation. In destroying the Nazi power, we have destroyed one great evil; much that was good and beautiful has also been destroyed, and the economic organisation of Europe lies in ruins. We can rebuild what has been destroyed only by toil and sweat, and there is no short cut back to prosperity.<sup>124</sup>

It is unlikely that Churchill, while still Prime Minister in 1945, issued any direct instructions to Montgomery to rebuild Germany with the aim of countering a perceived direct military threat from the Soviet Union, though documents released by the National Archives in 1998 showed that, immediately after the end of the war, secret plans, codenamed 'Operation Unthinkable', were made for a surprise Anglo-American attack on the Soviet Union, with the assistance of ten German divisions.<sup>125</sup> However there is evidence that both Churchill and Montgomery were concerned that the Soviet Union would encourage communist agitators within Germany. For example, in an exchange of telegrams on 5 June 1945, Montgomery wrote:

I have increasing evidence every day of communist propaganda going on in the British Zone and agents are working in the Russian DP camps and these meetings are being attended by German agents. The DP camps are being evacuated to the Russian Zone but this is a slow business and in any case communist 'cells' will be left behind for certain. I am watching the situation very carefully....<sup>126</sup>

In August 1945, after the Potsdam Agreements, the immediate military threat from Russia receded and Montgomery was able to report to his Corps Commanders that:

The military problem has now changed in light of the Berlin meetings. The military situation via-a-vis the Russians is now 100 per cent all right. It is evident that the Russians will shortly declare war on Japan.<sup>127</sup>

For the remainder of his year as Military Governor, there is little mention in Montgomery's papers of any direct threat from Russia. However, the ideological threat of communism to the

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<sup>124</sup> BLM 85/7, speech in reply to receiving the Freedom of the City of Antwerp, 7 June 1945

<sup>125</sup> Capet, 'The Creeds of the Devil'; David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), pp476-7

See also IWM BLM 162, 'The Truth about the Telegram'. In a speech at Woodford in 1954, Churchill said he had sent Montgomery a telegram in May 1945 ordering him to 'stack' weapons previously used by the German armies, in case they were needed 'to fight the Russians with German help.' The speech aroused controversy in the press and in Parliament and Churchill was obliged to retract the claim, after no such telegram could be found in the archives. In a handwritten note for the file, dated June 1959, Montgomery stated that there never was any telegram, as he received verbal, but not written, orders from Churchill to do this, but subsequently decided, on his own initiative, to destroy the weapons after receiving no further instructions from London.

<sup>126</sup> IWM BLM 164/3, telegram from Montgomery to Churchill dated 5 June 1945.

<sup>127</sup> BLM 86/3, 'Notes of Corps Commanders Conference', 2 Aug. 1945

established order continued to underlie his concerns, expressed for example in his valedictory memo of 1 May 1946, that they might 'fail in Germany' due to food shortages, economic conditions, the attitude of the local population and the need for a 'change of heart'. If conditions did not improve, an increasingly hostile German population would, he believed, 'begin to look EAST. When that happens we shall have failed, and there will exist a definite menace to the British Empire.'<sup>128</sup>

### **The creation of a new directive on Military Government**

The policy of German reconstruction was elaborated and confirmed in a new directive issued by Robertson, as Montgomery's chief of staff, on 10 September 1945, following two months of discussions within Military Government. In his second 'Note on the Present Situation', issued on 6 July 1945, Montgomery stated that over the past two months the 'full extent of the debacle' had become apparent and they now knew the 'magnitude of the problem that confronts us in the rebuilding of Germany.'<sup>129</sup> Part of the problem was 'a tendency to adhere rigidly' to instructions issued earlier by SHAEF, the joint US and British Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force.<sup>130</sup> These instructions, he continued, were now out of date and a new general directive was required. A week later in his third 'Note', he wrote that:

Our present attitude towards the German people is negative, it must be replaced by one that is positive and holds out hope for the future.<sup>131</sup>

Montgomery's 'Notes' did not provide much detail about the specific actions required from his subordinates, but on 21 July army commanders and Control Commission heads of division were sent the 'rough draft' of a new detailed directive.<sup>132</sup> This stated that: 'the following action will be taken by 21 Army Group and the Control Commission.' There

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<sup>128</sup> BLM 88/13, 'Notes on the German situation', 1 May 1946

<sup>129</sup> BLM 85/15, 'Notes on the Present Situation', 6 July 1945

<sup>130</sup> A large number of instruction documents were issued by US and British bodies during planning for the occupation, including the printed set of directives issued by the British War Office in October 1944. The SHAEF handbook, issued in December 1944, covered the immediate pre- and post-surrender period, before SHAEF was dissolved in July 1945. Some documents were agreed tripartite policy; others represented UK or US views only. The often quoted US directive, JCS 1067, for example, did not apply to the British Zone and the US and British did not agree a common occupation policy before their two zones merged to form the 'Bizone' in January 1947. See, *inter alia*, FO 371/46730, 'C1071 – Allied Policy for the Occupation and Military Government of Germany'; Donnison, *Civil Affairs, North-West Europe*, chapter 11, 'Supreme Commander's Plans for Germany'; Michael Balfour and John Mair, *Four Power Control in Germany and Austria 1945-1946* (Oxford: Survey of International Affairs 1939-1946, Oxford University Press, 1956), pp22-24; Reusch, *Deutsches Berufsbeamtentum*, pp121ff; Ullrich Schneider, 'Nach dem Sieg: Besatzungspolitik und Militäregierung' in Josef Foschepoth & Rolf Steininger (eds.), *Britische Deutschland- und Besatzungspolitik* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1985), pp47-64.

<sup>131</sup> IWM BLM 85/15, 'Notes on the Present Situation', 14 July 1946

<sup>132</sup> FO 1050/806, 'Draft Directive from Chief of Staff (British Zone)', 21 July 1945

followed twenty pages of specific instructions on steps to be taken to reconstruct Germany, under thirty headings including: 'Shortage of Food', 'Shortage of Coal', 'Inadequate Transportation Facilities', 'Re-Starting of Vital Industries', 'Housing Shortage', 'Freedom from Disease', 'Reopening of Schools', 'Trade Unions', 'Churches', 'German Youth', 'Freedom of Assembly', 'Freedom of Speech', 'Political Parties' and 'Elections'. Recipients were requested to submit comments, rewriting paragraphs if necessary, no later than the evening of the following Wednesday, 25 July.<sup>133</sup> Over the next month the draft was revised, a few aspects toned down,<sup>134</sup> and the final directive issued on 10 September 1945.<sup>135</sup>

The timing was significant, as the first 'rough draft' directive was issued on 21 July, after the General Election in Britain on 5 July, but before the announcement of the results on 26 July and the formation of a new Labour government. The draft was issued while Truman, Stalin and Churchill, later Attlee, were meeting at Potsdam to decide the future of Germany, but before agreement was reached and the conference closed on 2 August. It appears as if Montgomery was trying to establish a new policy for the British Zone and pre-empt the outcome of both the election in Britain and decisions reached at Potsdam, while he had the freedom to act on his own initiative. The timing also coincided with the replacement of Montgomery's Chief of Staff, General Weeks, by Robertson. Robertson's appointment was confirmed by the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, on 21 July and he arrived in Germany to take over from Weeks on 25 July.<sup>136</sup> Perhaps one reason Montgomery placed such urgency on Robertson's appointment, was to ensure that a chief of staff was in place whom he knew well and could trust to implement the new directive.

The extent of the change in direction is evident from comparing the new directive to the previous set of directives issued by the War Office in October 1944. Many of the earlier directives covered diplomatic and legal issues, such as international treaties, relations with neutral countries and the reform of Nazi laws. Others concerned disbanding the German armed forces, the status of prisoners-of-war, the destruction of war material and the control

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid

<sup>134</sup> For example, headings such as 'Shortage of Food' and 'Inadequate Transportation facilities' were changed to a more neutral 'Food' and 'Transportation Facilities'.

<sup>135</sup> FO 1050/1040, 'Directive on Military Government from Chief of Staff (British Zone)', 10 Sept. 1945. For the Foreign Office reaction to the directive, which they received on 14 Sept. see FO 371/46735, C5962. A senior official, Con O'Neill, minuted: 'It gives me, in general, the impression that British Military Govt. has now embarked on a policy of Full Speed Ahead for German rehabilitation.'

<sup>136</sup> WO 258/83

of German industries.<sup>137</sup> The September 1945 directive created new policies for previously unexpected circumstances and did not conflict directly with previous instructions. Taken as a whole, however, it represented a change in direction from prevention, control and restrictions on German economic and political activities, to reconstruction of the physical infrastructure and the economy, and the renewal of social and political life.

Montgomery was probably well aware that a constructive policy towards Germany was unlikely to receive much sympathy in Britain among politicians and public opinion. Public hostility towards Germany reached its highest point in April and May 1945, as people reacted to numerous reports of war crimes and atrocities, culminating with the newsreel films of concentration camps.<sup>138</sup> The following sections explore further the reasons for the change in Military Government policy, so soon after the end of the war. They show that, while it was partly a pragmatic response by Montgomery and his generals to physical destruction, food shortages, disease, lawlessness and possible social unrest in the British Zone, it can also be explained as an idealistic interpretation of lessons they had learnt over the previous fifty years, in particular their memories of the First World War, their understanding of the British Empire as a force for good in the world and their personal moral and religious beliefs.

### **2.3 Missionary idealism: the occupation as a moral crusade**

*'We have won the war; we now have to rebuild a new civilisation: a new world in which all nations may live in peace and prosperity. We cannot achieve success in this great task unless we have a firm spiritual basis on which to build.'*<sup>139</sup>

*'A strong and united Empire, united in a common belief in freedom and justice, is one of the greatest forces for good in the world today.'*<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> BLM 165/5

<sup>138</sup> Margaret Kertesz, *The Enemy – British images of the German People during the Second World War* (Univ. of Sussex: unpublished PhD Diss, 1993), p191

<sup>139</sup> BLM 86/5, reply by Montgomery on receiving the Freedom of Lambeth, 15 Aug. 1945

<sup>140</sup> BLM 86/11, speech by Montgomery on receiving the Freedom of Londonderry, 15 Sept. 1945



## Memories of the First World War

In the first few months after the end of the Second World War, Montgomery and many of his colleagues assumed that the occupation would last twenty years or more, to prevent any new German government from re-arming and industrialists from building weapons, as had happened after the First World War.<sup>141</sup> Material written for dissemination to the troops and Control Commission staff made frequent reference to avoiding mistakes made earlier, when the British army occupied the Rhineland. Montgomery's first letter on non-fraternisation, for example, issued in March 1945, warned that:

Twenty-seven years ago the Allies occupied Germany: but Germany has been at war ever since. Our Army took no revenge in 1918; it was more than considerate, and before a few weeks had passed many soldiers were adopted into German households. The enemy worked hard at being amiable...

Meanwhile the German general staff prepared for war, and

'Organising sympathy' became a German industry ... So accommodating were the occupying forces that the Germans came to believe we would never fight them again in any cause.<sup>142</sup>

Similar cautionary messages were contained in a series of articles in early issues of the *British Zone Review*. Readers were told that the Rhineland occupation was used by the Germans to divide the Allies, by courting sympathy from the British whilst complaining to them about the French. Meanwhile Germany was 'only shamming dead financially and economically'.<sup>143</sup>

Contemporary accounts, written in the 1920s, described how the troops generally got on well with the local population and in many cases returned home 'definitely pro-German',<sup>144</sup> but some authors criticised the Allies for not actively supporting democratic forces within Germany.<sup>145</sup> Violet Markham, who spent two years in Germany with her husband, the chief

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<sup>141</sup> BLM 87/2, 'Notes on the post-war army', 7 Oct. 1945; George Murray, 'The British Contribution' in Arthur Hearnden (ed.), *The British in Germany: Educational Reconstruction after 1945* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), p65; Noel Annan, *Changing Enemies: The Defeat and Regeneration of Germany* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), p155

<sup>142</sup> BLM 85/10

<sup>143</sup> 'Experiences of Rhineland Occupation 1919-1925', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.2, 13 Oct. 1945, p5. See also 'Lessons of History', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.5, 24 Nov. 1945, pp1-2; 'Why Weimar Failed', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.7, 22 Dec. 1945, pp4-5

<sup>144</sup> Violet Markham, *Return Passage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p159

<sup>145</sup> Notably G.E.R. Gedye, *The Revolver Republic: France's Bid for the Rhine* (London: J.W. Arrowsmith Limited, 1930). See below pp168-9

demobilization officer for the British Army of the Rhine, wrote in *A Woman's Watch on the Rhine* that 'Life in Cologne is very pleasant for the occupying army' and 'surely no Army of Occupation was ever so well housed or so comfortable as we are.'<sup>146</sup> Although she had no doubts as to the 'noble ideal' for which the British had fought the war, and was irritated at Germany's 'refusal to say she is sorry', she was critical of Allied post-war policy, especially the continuation of the economic blockade and the Treaty of Versailles which, she said, had 'scrapped the fundamental ideals for which we fought the war.'<sup>147</sup> In her view, the democratic government which emerged in Germany in 1918 had an impossible task as it was 'confronted by hunger, defeat, despair, and the miseries which resulted from the blockade' and the Allies were to blame for the rise of the extreme parties and the decline in the vote for the Social Democrats in the elections of 1920.<sup>148</sup>

A group of British intelligence officers, given the task of observing conditions in Germany in 1919, were more concerned with the threat of social collapse or 'Bolshevism' than with a revival of German militarism, which shows that in some respects there was little change in British attitudes between then and 1945. One of the officers wrote in his report that Bolshevism was a dangerous doctrine spread by agitators, who were either 'Adventurers' receiving financial support from Russia, or 'Idealists' who came 'from the "modern" intellectual and artistic classes.' In normal times, when people were contented and prosperous, the 'ordinary German' would pay no attention to the 'doctrines of the revolutionary', but:

Under the increasing stress of famine and unemployment, there is no question but that the whole country will be consumed by the flame of Bolshevism which will spread with such rapidity that the waters of the Rhine will be incapable of checking its advance.<sup>149</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn, according to a Foreign Office memo summarising the reports, was that it was in British and Allied interests to relax the blockade and permit food supplies to enter the country and so assist the Germans to resume a normal economic life.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Violet Markham, *A Woman's Watch on the Rhine* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1921), p26, p66

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, p298, p257, p207

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, p208, p220

<sup>149</sup> FO 608/129, 'Peace Conference files (British delegation) 1919', folios 422-458, 'Bolshevism in Germany', report by Lt. Gibson, Irish Guards, of a visit to Germany from 1-24 Feb. [1919]

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, folios 403-412, 'Conditions in Germany', memo by Mr Powicke, 26 Feb. 1919, with attached report by Colonel Cornwall summarising the observations of the officers.

These contemporary views of Germany after the First World War, written and published in 1919 and 1921, help explain some of the ambivalence in British policy and attitudes after the Second World War. On the one hand, a concern not to be deceived again by a duplicitous people, who had courted sympathy from well-meaning Allied soldiers, claiming they were victims of an unjust peace settlement, while planning their revenge and preparing for war. But on the other hand, a concern that the hunger, despair and unemployment which followed the First World War should not be repeated, for fear that an even worse disaster might occur in the not so distant future, and a belief that restrictive measures alone, however strictly enforced, were insufficient to avoid mistakes made previously.

The lessons Robertson learnt from his father, who had commanded the British Army of the Rhine from 1919-1920, were different from the conventional wisdom prevalent in 1945 among British Members of Parliament. Robertson described later how, following his appointment as Deputy Military Governor in July 1945, he was given a copy of Brigadier Morgan's book *Assize of Arms*<sup>151</sup> as 'our guide in preventing clandestine re-armament by the Germans.'<sup>152</sup> His copy was one of 800 printed by the War Office for distribution to British members of the Control Commission.<sup>153</sup> Morgan had been a member of the Inter-Allied Military Control Commission in Germany from 1919 to 1923 and was fiercely critical of the British failure to prevent German re-armament. During the Second World War, he worked closely with a post-war policy group of members of both Houses of Parliament, which produced two reports on German disarmament and advocated a harsh post-war policy towards Germany.<sup>154</sup> Robertson remarked that, at first, 'it all seemed to make good sense', but then referred to his own experience as a member of the British delegation at the League of Nations in Geneva in 1932-3 and how this had made him: 'a first-hand witness of the failure to deal properly with Germany after World War 1.' He continued by saying:

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<sup>151</sup> J.H. Morgan, *Assize of Arms: being the story of the Disarmament of Germany and her Rearmament (1919-1939)* (London: Methuen, 1945)

<sup>152</sup> Robertson, 'A Miracle? Potsdam 1945 – Western Germany 1965'

<sup>153</sup> David G. Williamson, *The British in Germany 1918-1930: the Reluctant Occupiers* (New York, Oxford: Berg, 1991), p348

<sup>154</sup> Morgan, *Assize of Arms*, p251. The reports of the parliamentary group were published with an introduction for a general audience as: Anthony Weymouth, *Germany: Disease and Treatment* (London: Hutchinson, 1945)

My father had been Military Governor for a period then. He often talked to me about the mistakes and problems of those years. 'The idea that you can hold down a country like Germany with her face in the dust indefinitely is a foolish one' he used to say.<sup>155</sup>

If it was not possible to 'hold Germany down' for ever, there had to be an alternative policy to one that was purely negative, based on disarmament, demilitarisation and economic controls, as at the end of the First World War.

The lessons Montgomery, Robertson, Bishop and many of their generation learnt from their understanding of the First World War, the Rhineland Occupation, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, inflation in Germany in the 1920s and economic depression in Britain and elsewhere in the 1930s, were that poverty and unemployment were a prime cause of social unrest and political dissatisfaction. They did not question the need for disarmament and demilitarisation, but believed this had to be combined with economic reconstruction, active support for democratic political parties and willingness to work together with those Germans who were prepared to accept their professed values and principles.

Some historians of Germany have criticised the British authorities for not supporting the antifascist groups that emerged very widely in Germany at the end of the war.<sup>156</sup> The background and outlook of the British officers responsible for Military Government meant that they were unlikely to sympathise with people they saw as potential communist sympathisers or revolutionaries. Their priorities, as army officers and members of the British professional middle classes, were dealing with chaos and disorder, disease and the threat of starvation. The German armies had been utterly defeated. There was no sign of resistance, the German population was cooperative and did as it was told. The last thing they wanted was anything that might encourage social unrest, let alone spread dangerous ideas that might disturb the established order at home.

### **Echoes of Empire**

A number of commentators have observed that British policy and actions in occupied Germany showed many similarities with those used to govern the British Empire, especially

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<sup>155</sup> Robertson, 'A Miracle? Potsdam 1945 – Western Germany 1965'

<sup>156</sup> Gareth Pritchard, 'Schwarzenberg 1945: Antifascists and the "Third Way" in German Politics', *European History Quarterly*, Vol.35(4), 2005, pp499-522

the strategy of indirect rule and appointment of local, district and regional commissioners.

Donald Cameron Watt, for example, wrote that:

It will be obvious that the method of control and re-education bears a strong resemblance to the systems of indirect rule administered in the 1890s by Lord Cromer in Egypt and Lord Lugard in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>157</sup>

Before the outbreak of war in 1939, Montgomery, Bishop, Robertson and other senior army officers of their generation had spent most of their working lives in India, Africa, Egypt or Palestine and their outlook on the world was permeated with the ideals, values and prejudices of the British Empire. In the preface to his memoirs Bishop wrote that:

This book is about a life mostly spent in the service of the British Empire. Although it is fashionable at the present time to decry this period of our history, the author hopes that his story may make some contribution towards a better understanding of our successes and failures and of the joys and sorrows which came our way.<sup>158</sup>

For them, the Empire was a force for good in the world, and it was only by drawing on the strength, manpower and resources of the empire, that Britain could succeed in defeating the continental powers of Germany and Italy. British rule was also, so they believed, in the best interests of the local population. As Bishop wrote in his memoirs:

I feel no doubt that when an authoritative history of our Colonial Empire comes to be written, the part played by the British officials who administered it in establishing and maintaining law and order, in holding the interests of the people above all else and in educating and preparing them to run their own affairs in due course will become fully evident.<sup>159</sup>

Robertson expressed a similar view in a speech to Control Commission staff in July 1947, in which he said:

We here are the empire builders ... the empire of true democracy, of peace and decency<sup>160</sup>

Montgomery's view of the Empire transcended a narrow English or British nationalism. In two speeches in September 1945, on being made Honorary Burgess of the City of Belfast and

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<sup>157</sup> D.C. Watt, *Britain looks to Germany A Study of British Opinion and Policy towards Germany since 1945* (London: Oswald Wolff, 1965), p73

<sup>158</sup> Bishop, *Look Back with Pleasure*, pi

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, p58

<sup>160</sup> FO 1030/329, Verbatim notes of speech by Deputy Military Governor to Staff, 31 July 1947, quoted in Williamson, *A Most Diplomatic General*, p105

awarded the Freedom of the City of Londonderry, he referred to himself as an Irishman, and to Londonderry as 'almost his home town'.<sup>161</sup> Although he was born in London, his family had owned an estate for several generations at Moville, twenty miles from Londonderry, across the border with the Irish Republic in County Donegal. A republican inhabitant of the city of Derry would not have agreed with the content of these speeches then, let alone now, but we have no reason to doubt that the views Montgomery expressed were sincere and a genuine reflection of what he thought and felt at the time:

Before the war, the Empire was everywhere weak ... A weak Empire is a danger to ourselves and to the whole world. But a strong and united Empire, united in a common belief in freedom and justice, is one of the greatest forces for good in the world today.

This ancient city of ours can well understand these things, since it has itself been through difficult times and suffered great tribulations: the ancient city of Derry being finally reduced to ashes early in the seventeenth century. But the people of London assisted in the work of reconstruction, and a new city arose on the ruins of the old: and was called Londonderry, on account of its connection with the capital of the Empire.

We of Londonderry thus have a link with the Empire that can never be broken: a link that binds us strongly to the very heart of the Empire.<sup>162</sup>

This idealistic view of the Empire was echoed by Bishop, when he wrote of the idea of imperial trusteeship:

Today 'Colonialism' has become for many a term of reproach, but no one who saw British Colonial officials in action could fail to appreciate the sense of responsibility which animated them all ... It is hardly realised today how seriously these men took their responsibilities as the trustees of the people whose affairs they were administering until the time came when they were able to take the task over themselves.<sup>163</sup>

The idea of imperial trusteeship could be translated into a similar view of the British role in occupied Germany, whereby the British would administer a country until the 'natives' could be trusted to govern themselves. In the absence of any other framework, the British Empire was a model Montgomery and other officers, born before 1900, believed they knew and understood and could apply, with modifications, to the problems they faced in the chaos of post-war Germany.

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<sup>161</sup> BLM 86/11, speech on receiving the Freedom of the City of Londonderry, 15 Sept. 1945

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>163</sup> Bishop, *Look Back with Pleasure*, p44

### **'Saving the soul of Germany'**

Montgomery, Robertson and Bishop held strong moral and religious beliefs and it is impossible to understand their motivation and aims in occupied Germany, without some reference to what might be called 'missionary idealism'. On several occasions they referred to their task as a moral crusade, helping the Germans to 'find their own salvation',<sup>164</sup> or 'fighting a battle over the soul of Germany',<sup>165</sup> as if they were missionaries trying to convert the heathen, rather than victors in war, administering a defeated enemy country.

They were not alone in this. General Eisenhower started his personal D-Day message to all 'soldiers, sailors and airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force': 'You are about to embark on the Great Crusade'.<sup>166</sup> His memoirs of the period are called *Crusade in Europe*. For many British and American soldiers, the crusade did not end when the war was won. A British colonel wrote that, 'the re-birth of Germany is fundamentally a moral and not a material issue. It is in fact a moral Crusade ... Too much talk about "democracy" (that overworked word) and not enough about Christianity will tend to place the whole of the vast undertaking to which we are committed on too low a plane'.<sup>167</sup> In December 1947 Robert Birley, shortly to be appointed education adviser to the Military Governor in Germany, said that the experience of the First World War had 'taught us that military victory was not enough and that Germany would only cease to threaten the peace of the world if there were a change in the mind and outlook of the German people. Above all we were faced with what was pre-eminently a spiritual problem'.<sup>168</sup>

Both Birley and Montgomery believed that the need for 'a firm spiritual basis on which to build' applied to Britain as well as Germany, and could form the basis of the relations between the two countries.<sup>169</sup> Over a quarter of the German protestant clergy joined the Nazi Party before 1933.<sup>170</sup> Although there were notable individual examples of resistance, such as pastors Dietrich Bonhöffer and Martin Niemöller, many prominent individuals in the German

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<sup>164</sup> 'Introductory Message by the Commander-in-Chief British Zone', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.1, 29 Sept. 1945, p1

<sup>165</sup> Robertson, Truman presidential library interview; Montgomery, *Memoirs*, p399

<sup>166</sup> Copy given to me by my father who played a part in the D-Day landings. Also available via the Internet, [<http://www.kansasheritage.org/abilene/ikespeech.html> accessed 26 August 2009]

<sup>167</sup> Letter from Col. J. Hennessey, 'Open Letter Bag', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.4, 10 Nov. 1945, p18

<sup>168</sup> Robert Birley, *The German Problem and the responsibility of Britain. The Burge lecture* (London: SCM Press, 1947), p5

<sup>169</sup> BLM 86/5, reply on receiving the Freedom of Lambeth, 15 Aug. 1945

<sup>170</sup> Bessel, *Germany 1945*, p316

churches were sympathetic to at least some elements of Nazi ideology, or, at best, failed to condemn evident crimes and atrocities.<sup>171</sup> But for men such as Montgomery, Robertson and Bishop, faced at the end of the war with problems that appeared all but insoluble, it was important to seek out common ground with Germans who shared their values.

Although Nazi Germany represented the epitome of evil, a shared belief in Christianity could form a common bond with their defeated enemy. Bishop recalled Montgomery saying that:

All the bridges are down between ourselves and the Germans except one, we both share a common Christianity. Let us see how we can build on that.<sup>172</sup>

Montgomery, Robertson and Bishop, shared the view, widely held in Britain at the time, that political, social, economic or historical explanations for the rise of Nazism, for the war and the atrocities committed during it, were not enough. Some conservative thinkers argued that the war had a religious and spiritual dimension. It was a battle between good and evil, and the rise of the Nazi Party within Germany was due to spiritual factors, or more accurately, to a lack of spirituality and a lack religious faith.<sup>173</sup>

An insight into this way of thinking can be gained from Amy Buller's *Darkness over Germany* published in 1943, in which she referred to the 'fundamentally religious appeal to the Nazi youth in much of the teaching given to them.'<sup>174</sup> In her view, the growing secularisation of society, in Germany and elsewhere, meant that young people were all too easily attracted to an *ersatz* religion, with the ceremonies and the sense of belonging that the Nazi party provided. Many had suffered hardship and unemployment during the economic depression and the experience of fellowship and the ceremony of the party gave them, she wrote, a

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<sup>171</sup> Christopher Probst, *Protestant Responses to Martin Luther's 'Judenschriften' in Germany, 1929-1945*, (London: PhD Diss, 2008)

<sup>172</sup> Bishop, *Look back with Pleasure*, p165. See also AB2, letter to Dr Stoltenhoff, General Superintendent of the German Evangelical Church, 5 Jan. 1949

<sup>173</sup> For example, Sir Walter Moberly, *The Crisis in the University*, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1949), p20. Moberly was a leading Anglican thinker and member of *Moot*, a group of liberal, mainly Anglican, theologians and writers that included T.S. Eliot, J.H. Oldham and Karl Mannheim. See Matthew Grimley, 'Civil Society and the Clerisy: Christian Elites and National Culture, c.1930-1950' in Jose Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp231-247

<sup>174</sup> Amy Buller, *Darkness over Germany* (London, New York, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co, 1943), p150. Buller was secretary of the Student Christian Movement and closely connected with High Anglican circles including Lord Halifax, Archbishop Temple, Walter Moberly and A.D. Lindsay, Master of Balliol College Oxford. In 1947 she founded Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park, a Christian educational foundation, with support and patronage from Queen Elizabeth. Moberly was its first Principal. See Walter James, *A Short Account of Amy Buller and the Founding of St. Catherine's, Cumberland Lodge*, (Privately printed, 1979)



'new life and energy [which] transcended as well as transformed their immediate tasks and gave their own little existence a cosmic significance and eternal destiny.'<sup>175</sup>

Bishop wrote in similar terms in May 1946, in an article in the *British Zone Review* entitled '*Ave atque vale*'<sup>176</sup> on Montgomery's retirement as military governor. He described their practical achievements in the first year of occupation under 'Field Marshal Montgomery's guidance and inspiration', seamlessly combining the positive and negative aspects of their work: disarming and disbanding the *Wehrmacht*, destroying quantities of ammunition, repatriating two million displaced persons, restoring road, rail and canal systems, denazification and internment of 50,000 Nazi leaders and officials, the encouragement of new political parties, licensing of newspapers, opening of schools and universities and so on. However, this was only part of their task as:

The war unleashed by Nazism on the world has left Germany not only shattered materially but faced with grave spiritual difficulties ... None of these efforts can ... succeed unless they are accompanied by a spiritual regeneration of the German people.<sup>177</sup>

The 'greatest task facing the British authorities', he continued, was to 'hold out some measure of hope to the German people' that an acceptance of the Christian principles of 'humanism and democracy', would eventually produce the economic benefits of 'a reasonable standard of living', and their ability to re-enter 'the international economic life of Europe'.<sup>178</sup>

On 4 May 1950, shortly before he left Germany, Bishop's faith appeared to have been rewarded, when he was able to speak with confidence, at the opening of the 'British Centre', *Die Brücke*, in Cologne, and say:

You and I may hear, at times, the remarks of pessimistic people who say that we have so little in common, and that we can, therefore, learn so little from one another. That is not true. We have much in common, and much to learn from one another. The most important thing that we have in common is, of course, this.

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<sup>175</sup> Buller, *Darkness over Germany*, p193, p196

<sup>176</sup> The quote is from Catullus, '*Atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale*', which the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* translates as 'And so, my brother, hail, and farewell evermore!'

<sup>177</sup> '*Ave Atque Vale*', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.17, 11 May 1946, initialled W.H.A.B.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*

We both believe that there was once a man who, although he never went to a university, or wrote a book, or travelled more than 200 miles from where he was born, yet became the centre-piece of the human race, and the leader of the column of progress.

I hope and pray that Almighty God may guide and bless our joint work in this house.<sup>179</sup>

Exactly five years after Montgomery received the unconditional surrender of all German armed forces in North-West Europe, Bishop was able to refer to their common belief in Christianity, the great 'kindness and hospitality' he had received in Cologne; to the 'one overriding wish' shared by 'ordinary peoples of all countries' that their children would live a better and more peaceful life than he or his generation had experienced; and to his understanding that British and Germans had 'much in common and much to learn from one another.'<sup>180</sup>

## 2.4 Conclusion

We know a great deal about what life was like in Germany after the war, but mostly from the point of view of German writers and politicians, such as novels by Heinrich Böll, plays by Wolfgang Borchert, numerous historical works and personal memoirs. In addition, many historians have tried to reinterpret the past critically, writing deliberately with hindsight, on topics such as the failure to pursue those guilty of Nazi war crimes, how the past is remembered and commemorated, or highlighting social and cultural continuities across the great divide of 1945.

The purpose of this chapter is not to re-visit these debates, but to provide an alternative, now largely forgotten, perspective; that of three British senior army officers who were present at the time. Historians are sometimes tempted to judge the past on the basis of what they believe people should have done, rather than what they did. This study does not attempt to make any value judgement and approve or criticise the individuals researched. It describes the situation in Germany as perceived through their eyes, together with their aims and intentions, and to some extent, their achievements and failures as they perceived them. This is, of course, a partial view, which does not take full account of other evidence, such as the

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<sup>179</sup> AB3, speech by Bishop at the opening of *Die Brücke* in Cologne, 4 May 1950

<sup>180</sup> Ibid

views of the Germans they dealt with, or the limitations and constraints under which they acted. It may, however, help correct some misunderstandings where historians have argued that a particular British or Allied policy was 'a failure' or 'ineffective', based on not fully appreciating what men such as Montgomery, Robertson and Bishop aimed to achieve at the time. Their view of Germany Zero Hour, *Stunde Null*, was not unlike a contemporary German perspective as told in many personal memoirs: chaos and destruction, hunger and starvation, a sense of hopelessness and fear for the future, but despite all this, a determination to try to make things better. Shocked at the destruction they saw around them, they worked to restore the basic elements of what they perceived as civilised society: enforcement of law and order; provision of enough food to prevent starvation, control of disease and rebuilding the economic infrastructure. This seemed a huge task, both more important and more difficult than enforcing the negative provisions of the Potsdam Agreement to disarm, demilitarise and denazify Germany.

The greatest task of all, that of 'winning the peace', was more difficult to define. The three generals would describe it in different ways at different times as 'spiritual regeneration'<sup>181</sup>, 'a change of heart'<sup>182</sup>, 'the growth of truly democratic thought'<sup>183</sup>, the 're-birth of moral and intellectual enlightenment'<sup>184</sup>, 'the acceptance of the principles of Christian humanism and democracy'<sup>185</sup> or simply the 'administration of Germany according to the principles which we hold to be right.'<sup>186</sup> To understand what they and other senior officers of their generation meant, it is necessary to refer to their family and social backgrounds, education at public school, experiences in the First World War and after, understanding of the British Empire, and personal religious and moral beliefs. They had tremendous confidence in the strength of their own traditions and sought to apply these to the situation they found in Germany.

People were more important to them than organisational structures and the principles that meant most to them were those of fairness, (being 'stern but just'), individual responsibility, (those who rule should do so not in their own interest but in that of those they serve) and personal character (*'justum et tenacem propositi virum'* – the wise man firm of purpose),

<sup>181</sup> Bishop, 'Can we re-educate Germany?' *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.6, 8 Dec. 1945, pp3-4, initialled W.H.A.B.

<sup>182</sup> Montgomery, BLM 88/7, memorandum on 'The Problem in Germany', 1 Feb. 1946

<sup>183</sup> Robertson, FO 1030/328, DMG press conference, 29 April 1947

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>185</sup> Bishop, 'Ave Atque Vale', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.17, 11 May 1946, initialled W.H.A.B.

<sup>186</sup> Montgomery, 'Introductory Message by the Commander-in-Chief British Zone', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1 No.1, 29 Sept. 1945, p1

together with a firmly grounded sense of morality and religious belief. Perhaps this approach, of never forgetting that people mattered, was best summarised in a personal letter sent to Bishop, shortly before Christmas 1949, by Karl Arnold, a leading German politician, Christian socialist and Minister-President for North Rhine-Westphalia from 1947-1956:

I am an honest admirer of your ability, not to lose sight of the human angle [*Das Menschliche niemals aus dem Auge zu verlieren*] in the most difficult situations, which is the decisive factor in the relationship between victor and vanquished, if our great and common peace interests are not to suffer.<sup>187</sup>

In subsequent years, Montgomery, Robertson and Bishop looked back with pride on their achievements in Germany. The policies of physical and economic reconstruction, political renewal and personal reconciliation, which they started to implement in 1945, continued to apply throughout the occupation, despite changes in personnel, changes in emphasis and increased involvement by politicians in London. The next chapter discusses Montgomery's successor as Military Governor, Sholto Douglas. His more pragmatic and less idealistic approach to a different set of challenges highlights the complexity and some of the contradictions of the occupation.

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<sup>187</sup> AB2, letter from Karl Arnold, 22 Dec. 1949, my translation from the original German.

### 3 Sholto Douglas: 'The unhappiest period in my entire official life':

May 1946 – November 1947

*'It is still impossible for me to think of the time that I spent as Military Governor and Commander-in-Chief in Germany as anything but the unhappiest period of my entire official life'*<sup>1</sup>



Sholto Douglas in Hamburg, 1946 or 1947<sup>2</sup>

Marshal of the Royal Air Force, Sir Sholto Douglas, was the exception among the three British Military Governors. His formative experience as a young man was fighting as an airman over the Western Front in the First World War. He portrayed himself in his memoirs as one of a select group of fighter pilots, engaged in heroic individual combat with an equally brave and determined enemy, describing encounters with German fighter aces such as von Richthofen and Hermann Goering.<sup>3</sup> Whereas Montgomery enjoyed his time in Germany<sup>4</sup> and Robertson looked back with satisfaction at having contributed to the 'miracle' of a prosperous

<sup>1</sup> Sholto Douglas with Robert Wright, *Years of Command: the second volume of the autobiography of Sholto Douglas, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Douglas of Kirtleside G.C.B. M.C. D.F.S.* (London: Collins, 1966), p362

<sup>2</sup> Photograph from private family archive

<sup>3</sup> Sholto Douglas, *Years of Combat: the first volume of the autobiography of Sholto Douglas, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Douglas of Kirtleside G.C.B. M.C. D.F.S.* (London: Collins, 1963)

<sup>4</sup> BLM 170/21, letter to Attlee, 2 May 1946

and contented West Germany,<sup>5</sup> Douglas recalled it as the unhappiest period in his official life and wondered why he, an air force officer, was asked to solve problems 'which should have been in the hands of the politicians.'<sup>6</sup> Though nominally in charge, he acted as a figurehead, with Robertson taking an increasingly important role in all aspects of administration.<sup>7</sup>

Douglas' tenure as Military Governor from May 1946 to November 1947 coincided with the most difficult period of the occupation. Initial goodwill and relief that the war was over were succeeded by hunger strikes and protests.<sup>8</sup> Many Germans blamed the British for the deterioration in their living standards after the food ration was cut in March 1946 from 1550 to a near-starvation level of 1014 calories per day. Despite significant imports, the ration did not return to over 1500 calories until May 1948, six months after Douglas had left Germany.<sup>9</sup> There was little he could do to improve matters. It was not possible significantly to increase agricultural production in the British Zone, which had traditionally obtained much of its food from other parts of Germany.<sup>10</sup> The failure of the victorious allies to apply a common economic policy across the whole of Germany meant there was no prospect in the immediate future of increasing industrial production to generate sufficient exports to pay for food imports. In the meantime, the British taxpayer had to cover the deficit.

Douglas wrote in similar terms to Alec Bishop and other British army officers of his impressions of destruction in 1945 when he first visited Berlin,<sup>11</sup> but showed no signs of being motivated by Montgomery's 'missionary idealism' or by Robertson's belief that they were 'fighting a battle over the soul of Germany.' In his later memoirs, he described the situation and his own role in personal terms, rather than expressing his opinions on geopolitical matters such as the reconstruction of Germany, the future of the British Empire or the need to 'rebuild civilisation.' This chapter contrasts his personal background and aims in Germany with those of the more ideologically motivated army generals.

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<sup>5</sup> Robertson, 'A Miracle? Potsdam 1945 – Western Germany 1965'

<sup>6</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p362, p350

<sup>7</sup> Ian D. Turner, 'The Apparatus of Occupation Rule' in Turner (ed.), *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany*, p360; 'Profile General Robertson', *The Observer*, 8 Dec. 1946

<sup>8</sup> Michael Wildt, *Der Traum vom Sattwerden; Hunger und Protest, Schwarzmarkt und Selbsthilfe in Hamburg 1945-1948* (Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 1986), pp37ff; Günter J. Tittel, *Hunger und Politik: Die Ernährungskrise in der Bizone (1945-1949)*, (Frankfurt & New York: Campus Verlag, 1990), pp251ff

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Werner Klatt, 'Food and Farming in Germany: II. Farming and Land Reform', *International Affairs*, Vol.26, No.2, April 1950, p195. Before the war, areas east of the Oder-Neisse line exported 1m tonnes grain, 1/2m tonnes potatoes, 1/4m tonnes sugar and 1/4m tonnes meat to the rest of Germany.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p287

### 3.1 'A professional airman'

*'The years of the First World War provided us with an experience that was so extraordinary that it was impossible to understand immediately what it all meant, and so profound that it was to alter the whole course of our lives.'*<sup>12</sup>

William Sholto Douglas was born in Oxford in 1893, to a junior branch of an old-established aristocratic family distantly related to the Marquess of Queensbury. According to Douglas, the family was 'swindled' out of the ownership of estates in the West Indies. His grandfather inherited little and became a clergyman. His father, who also trained as a clergyman, was Assistant Chaplain at Merton College, Oxford. Soon after Douglas and his two brothers were born, his father moved to Siena, in Italy, and then left the church to become a successful art critic and dealer. He divorced his wife and accepted a position as Professor of Medieval History in Australia. After returning to Britain, he was appointed Director of the National Gallery of Ireland, married again twice and, according to Douglas, fathered at least eighteen children, eight of whom were illegitimate. He emigrated to the United States in 1940, converted to Roman Catholicism and died in 1951 in Italy.<sup>13</sup>

While his father travelled the world, Douglas and his two brothers were brought up by their mother in relative poverty in Balham, South London, although his father continued to support them and paid for their education at Tonbridge School.<sup>14</sup> Douglas obtained a classical scholarship to Lincoln College, Oxford, and, with further support from his father, attended university for one year before the outbreak of war in 1914. He claimed to have become a socialist at Tonbridge and Oxford, influenced by an 'aversion to snobbery' and sympathy for the underdog, but, as a serving RAF officer, he was not active in politics until after his retirement from Germany in 1947, when he accepted a peerage and supported the Labour Party in the House of Lords.<sup>15</sup>

On the outbreak of war in August 1914, Douglas was commissioned in the artillery. He left for France in November, volunteered as an air observer for the Royal Flying Corps and

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<sup>12</sup> Douglas, *Years of Combat*, p340

<sup>13</sup> Vincent Orange, 'Douglas, (William) Sholto, Baron Douglas of Kirtleside (1893–1969)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011

[<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/view/article/32876>, accessed 12 June 2012], (henceforward Orange, 'Douglas', *DNB*); Douglas, *Years of Combat*, pp17-26

<sup>14</sup> A leading English public school, though not as prestigious as Eton, Harrow, Winchester or Rugby

<sup>15</sup> Orange, 'Douglas', *DNB*; Douglas, *Years of Combat*, pp26-37

qualified as a pilot in July 1915. He wrote later that obtaining his wings was 'one of the proudest moments that I have ever known in my life.'<sup>16</sup> He was promoted to command a squadron and was awarded the Military Cross and Distinguished Flying Cross. Casualties were high, pilots flew without parachutes and mechanical breakdowns were frequent. He was seriously injured when he hit a horse during take-off and he had to recover in hospital in Britain before returning to the front in late 1917. His brother trained as an air observer and was killed in action.<sup>17</sup> Yet, despite the personal dangers, in later years he regretted the passing of this 'time of comparative innocence',<sup>18</sup> when pilots fought each other above and apparently a stage removed from the mass slaughter of troops on the ground. He ended the war, still only 24 years old, a lieutenant-colonel and one of the most experienced pilots in the newly formed RAF.<sup>19</sup>

After a short break as a pilot in the embryonic civil aviation industry, Douglas rejoined the RAF in 1920. He attended the newly formed Air Staff College, where his fellow students included Charles Portal<sup>20</sup> and Keith Park,<sup>21</sup> and he was one of four RAF officers selected for the first course at the Imperial Defence College, where he subsequently served as an instructor. His only overseas posting was from 1929-1932 in Egypt and as area commander in the Sudan. From 1936 he occupied senior administrative positions in the Air Ministry and succeeded Keith Park as head of Fighter Command in 1940. Other positions followed, as head of Middle East Command in December 1942 and Coastal Command in January 1944.<sup>22</sup>

Despite his experience and seniority, success at the highest level eluded him. Military historians have argued that he was on the wrong side in debates over strategy, such as his advocacy of offensive sweeps over enemy territory in 1941, which resulted in casualties higher than those incurred during the Battle of Britain for little strategic benefit, and his support for Churchill's unsuccessful Aegean campaign in 1943.<sup>23</sup> He was disappointed to be rejected for the post of Allied commander in South-East Asia due to US opposition, and at not being offered command of Allied air forces for the invasion of Normandy. When Charles

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<sup>16</sup> Douglas, *Years of Combat*, pp92-3

<sup>17</sup> Orange, 'Douglas', *DNB*; Douglas, *Years of Combat*, p144

<sup>18</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p11

<sup>19</sup> Orange, 'Douglas', *DNB*

<sup>20</sup> Chief of the Air Staff from 1940 - 1945

<sup>21</sup> Head of Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain

<sup>22</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*; Orange, 'Douglas', *DNB*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*



Portal retired as Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) in 1945, Douglas was one of three candidates considered to replace him, but was again unsuccessful. He was promoted to the rank of Marshal of the Royal Air Force, but shared with Arthur Harris, head of Bomber Command, the dubious distinction of being one of only two officers who attained this most senior rank in the RAF, without serving as CAS.<sup>24</sup>

From August 1945 to January 1946 Douglas served in Germany as Commander-in-Chief of the British Air Forces of Occupation (BAFO).<sup>25</sup> He claimed later that he did not want the post, writing that 'I felt less like going to Germany than to anywhere else', but he accepted it because the position required an officer 'of the most senior rank', he had previously worked well with Montgomery and he was curious about the fate of the German air force.<sup>26</sup> The work did not appear particularly onerous, as RAF and naval commanders in occupied Germany, unlike the army Corps Commanders, had no civil responsibilities. Douglas was nominally responsible for the disarmament of the *Luftwaffe* but left this to his deputy, Philip Wigglesworth, to manage.<sup>27</sup> The main activities, he recalled later, were difficulties over the repatriation of Czech and Polish airmen.<sup>28</sup> He was thankful that his responsibilities did not extend beyond those of an air force commander, disliked the working environment and resented being increasingly 'drawn in to the web of international politics.'<sup>29</sup> In January 1946 he heard he would be appointed Military Governor and Commander-in-Chief of all British forces in Germany, when Montgomery took up his post as Chief of the Imperial General Staff on 1 May.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, he left Germany and returned to the Air Ministry in London.

Robertson wrote to Douglas on 28 February 1946, suggesting he should establish his own personal organisation as soon as possible, as Montgomery intended to hand over his personal staff to the new army commander rather than to the new Military Governor,<sup>31</sup> but Douglas took no direct action, leaving all arrangements to the officials in Germany.<sup>32</sup> He decided to take three weeks holiday in the United States, to visit his father in New York and

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<sup>24</sup> Orange, 'Douglas', *DNB*; Douglas, *Years of Command*, p307

<sup>25</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p281

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid* p285

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, pp292-3, pp297-300

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, pp305-6. In December 1945 he wrote to his father that: 'I don't think you appreciate what an unpleasant life we lead in Germany at the present time ... I won't enlarge on this, but I loathe [underlined] being here. We live in an atmosphere of misery and starvation...'

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p308

<sup>31</sup> FO 1030/323, letter from Robertson to Douglas, 28 Feb. 1946

<sup>32</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p319

stay in California with the actor, Robert Montgomery, returning to London three days before leaving for Germany.<sup>33</sup> He complained later 'more in sorrow than in anger' that he received no briefing on his new role and was not sent a copy of Montgomery's valedictory 'Notes on the German Situation' addressed to Attlee, Bevin and Hynd.<sup>34</sup>

It does seem to me that it was an extraordinary state of affairs that such a vitally important document should have been handed around in London while the man who was most intimately concerned – the man who was literally on the spot in taking over from Montgomery – should have been left so much in the dark.<sup>35</sup>

This comment is disingenuous. Montgomery's 'Notes' repeated many of the points made in his earlier memo of 1 February 1946 on 'The Problem in Germany' which, though confidential, was distributed to all Military Government heads of Divisions and army Corps Commanders.<sup>36</sup> Austen Albu, for example, recently appointed to a position in the Political Division of the Control Commission, was shown a copy soon after his arrival in Germany.<sup>37</sup> Albu was also given a copy of Montgomery's 'Notes' of 1 May, as he referred to this in a memo to Robertson dated 19 June 1946.<sup>38</sup> This suggests that, had he wished to do so, Douglas could have obtained a copy of Montgomery's 'Notes' and could have familiarised himself with his views on current policy quite easily, by asking Robertson or other members of his staff. It is possible that, rather than a lack of briefing, he objected to what he considered to have been a personal slight by Montgomery in sending the memo to the politicians in London, but not to him.

Douglas's appointment as Military Governor is surprising, as is his decision to accept the post, given his limited overseas experience, his intense dislike of working in Germany and his stated desire not to become involved in issues outside his personal competence, such as international politics. Despite later denials, he may have been attracted by the status and prestige and may have seen it as a consolation for earlier disappointments. He claimed later he did not want to return to Germany, but Montgomery recommended him and Arthur Tedder, the newly appointed Chief of the Air Staff, persuaded him to accept the post.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, pp312-317

<sup>34</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p320. Montgomery's 'Notes on the German Situation' 1 May 1946 and covering letters to Attlee, Bevin and Hynd, are in BLM 170/20-23

<sup>35</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p320

<sup>36</sup> IWM BLM 88/7

<sup>37</sup> CAC, Albu Papers 13/2, handwritten diary, entry for Sunday 2 Feb 1946

<sup>38</sup> CAC, Albu Papers 28/3, memo dated 19 June 1946 on 'Policy in Germany' and covering note to Robertson

Douglas added that after returning to London in January 1946 he had second thoughts and only finally agreed after a personal meeting with Attlee.<sup>39</sup>

I have not found any record of this meeting or other official documents relating to his appointment, apart from a letter in which Montgomery told Robertson it was 'fairly certain' that Douglas would succeed him as Military Governor.<sup>40</sup> This tends to confirm Douglas' account that Montgomery recommended him for the position, but does not explain why the government thought him a suitable candidate. General Joseph McNarney, who replaced Eisenhower as Governor of the US Zone in November 1945, had served as an airman on the Western Front in the First World War<sup>41</sup> and it may have been thought advisable to follow the US lead by appointing an air officer rather than an army general to succeed Montgomery. Douglas's appointment may also have been intended to improve relations between the London and German arms of the administration, as Sir Arthur Street, Permanent Secretary of the newly created Control Office for Germany and Austria (COGA), had previously worked with him at the Air Ministry.<sup>42</sup> Overall, it would appear he was a safe choice, acceptable to the Labour Government and to all three armed services in Germany, and able to maintain good working relations with his US, French and Soviet counterparts and with the Civil Service administrators in London.

### 3.2 Conflicting aims

*'There was always this endless stream of problems: the handling of our international affairs, the supply of food, the health of the people of the country, a host of economic affairs, education, intelligence and information, local administration and politics, denazification, disarmament and reparations and refugees and legal affairs. There was never any shortage of paper work.'*<sup>43</sup>

Shortly after his appointment as Military Governor, Douglas spoke publicly for the first time, at the opening of an exhibition in London on 'Germany under Control', of his understanding of British aims:

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<sup>39</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, pp308-310

<sup>40</sup> FO 1030/323, handwritten letter from Montgomery to Robertson, 27 Jan. 1946

<sup>41</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p321

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, pp323-4

<sup>43</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p322

What are the objects of our occupation of Germany? In the first place we aim to destroy the military power of Germany and to eradicate Nazi-ism. We must not forget that these objects rank first in priority. Next we want to see Germany develop a sound sense of democratic government and social justice, to rebuild her peaceful industries and raise her standard of living to a reasonable level.<sup>44</sup>

This was entirely consistent with British policy as it had been formulated over the previous year by Montgomery and his generals, in combining the 'negative' aspects of demilitarisation and denazification with the more 'positive' policies of economic reconstruction and democratisation. However, little thought had been given to the cost, and how this could be justified to the British public. The physical reconstruction of Germany was an objective from the start of the occupation, to help create order out of chaos and prevent starvation and disease, but from early 1946, despite Douglas stating in his speech that demilitarisation and de-nazification were their highest priority, the need to reduce costs led to an increased emphasis on economic reconstruction for another reason, the hope that German exports would offset the cost of food imports paid by the British taxpayer.

The government provided conflicting directions. John Hynd, the minister with responsibility for Germany, was one of the strongest advocates of the view, agreed in principle by all, that their primary aim was to make another war impossible, through fundamentally changing the structure of German politics and society. He spoke on the same occasion as Douglas, in June 1946, in idealistic terms of the importance of their task of creating a free and democratic Germany. He acknowledged that the occupation would be costly and justified this by referring to the sacrifices of the previous six years and the need to secure peace, security and prosperity for their children, arguing that 'investment for peace is better, and infinitely cheaper than investment for war.'<sup>45</sup> However Hynd's views were not shared by the government as a whole. Hugh Dalton, Chancellor of the Exchequer, was increasingly concerned at the costs, estimated at £80 million for the 1946-7 financial year.<sup>46</sup> Around £70

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<sup>44</sup> FO 1039/669, 'Speech by Marshal of the Royal Air Force, Sir William Sholto Douglas ... at the opening of the Exhibition, "Germany under Control" in London on 7th June 1946'

<sup>45</sup> FO 945/533, 'Speech by Mr. John Hynd, M.P.' Another copy in FO 1039/669

<sup>46</sup> Hugh Dalton, *High Tide and After* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd, 1962), pp111-3. £80 million was 2% of total government expenditure for the year of £3,837m, but less than 5% of the 'Defence and Supply' budget of £1,667 million and less than the £335 million budgeted for food subsidies in Britain. See also TNA CAB 129/9, Cabinet memo by Bevin on 'Policy towards Germany', 3 May 1946, which stated that £80m was the net cost of civil administration and food imports, after deducting proceeds from German exports. The cost of the 'military establishment', including pay and allowances of the occupation troops, was a further £65m.

million was required to pay for imports, mainly food,<sup>47</sup> which could only be recovered by a higher level of German exports.

Douglas and his colleagues resolved the conflict between the principle of economic controls, as agreed at Potsdam to prevent future German re-armament, and the aim of economic reconstruction, to generate exports to offset the cost of food imports paid by the British taxpayer, by assuming that reviving the economy would make the Germans more receptive to democratic ideas and therefore less likely to start another war. In his speech at the exhibition opening, Douglas claimed that the positive and negative aims of the occupation were 'completely interdependent: you cannot re-educate a starving and unemployed people'.<sup>48</sup> A year later, in June 1947, he made substantially the same points in a speech at the Imperial Defence College, speaking on his home ground, as a former student and instructor, in front of an audience of like-minded individuals. He quoted Germans as saying that: 'it's no use talking to us about democratic ideals unless you first fill our bellies' and added that 'leading thoughtful Germans' were very insistent upon the need to give them, echoing a phrase that had been used frequently by Montgomery, '*hope for the future*' [my italics].<sup>49</sup> He and his audience may have agreed with Dalton that paying to feed their former enemy was an unwelcome necessity, but by implying agreement with the views of 'thoughtful Germans', Douglas indicated that they shared a common interest. Food was the key to the situation as without food Germans were unable to work. 'Short of letting Germans starve to death', he concluded, the only solution was 'to build up German industry to the point where Germans can pay for their own food by their own exports'.<sup>50</sup>

Douglas presented a third reason for economic reconstruction in his lecture, when he addressed the question of Russian attitudes to Germany. Russia, he said, had

a desire to convert Germany into a Communist state working under their control. They undoubtedly hope that the wretched conditions and low standard of living in the Western Zones will turn the eyes of the people towards communism, and that when a united Germany eventually appears it will be a Communist Germany.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> FO 1030/307, letter from Robertson to Corps Commanders, 1 May 1946

<sup>48</sup> FO 1039/669, speech by Douglas at the Exhibition opening, 7 June 1946

<sup>49</sup> FO 1030/170, Commander-in-Chief's lecture to the Imperial Defence College, 12 June 1947

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

This comment followed the conventional wisdom shared by many of his colleagues, in assuming that poor economic conditions would result in higher levels of support for communism, thereby reinforcing the converse argument he had previously attributed to Germans, that better living standards were a pre-condition for democracy. Quoting a common saying, he said that the Russians wished to extract as much as they could in reparations from Germany, as 'a cow fed from the west and milked from the East.'<sup>52</sup> No British Government could accept this 'in view of the financial strain in which we find ourselves today.'<sup>53</sup> Douglas ended his speech by saying that he thought it likely that the division of Germany would persist, despite British attempts to work for unification.<sup>54</sup> For financial as well as political reasons, British and US support for economic reconstruction had to be on their terms and therefore limited to the Western Zones.

### 3.3 Concerns over the death penalty

*'I did not think that the Foreign Secretary or anybody else had any right whatsoever to tell me what I should do, and that it was up to me to give my decision according to my conscience and my conscience alone.'*<sup>55</sup>

The official papers show that Douglas was generally pragmatic in the decisions he took, following policy agreed by his predecessor and delegating implementation to his deputies. It could be argued that his unhappiness as Military Governor was partly due to his facing greater difficulties than Montgomery before and Robertson after him, but in his memoirs he advanced another explanation, which he described as 'a matter of conscience': his concerns over the use of the death penalty by the Nuremberg Tribunal and British Military Courts.

Once economic reconstruction came to be seen as an essential prerequisite for political renewal, denazification assumed a lower priority, especially if former Nazis possessed skills

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<sup>52</sup> Bevin using the same phrase in discussions with US Secretary of State Marshall in early 1947, quoted in Anne Deighton, 'Cold-War Diplomacy: British Policy Towards Germany's Role in Europe, 1945-9' in Turner (ed.), *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany*, p29

<sup>53</sup> FO 1030/170, lecture to the Imperial Defence College, 12 June 1947

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 'Short of the Americans and ourselves clearing out of Germany altogether ... I can see no other solution which we could accept.'

<sup>55</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p337

or knowledge that were useful in rebuilding the economy.<sup>56</sup> Douglas later justified a pragmatic approach towards those who had supported a criminal regime by writing that 'cries for vengeance' had to be discouraged, in order to reduce the cost of the occupation:

I had no particular liking for the Germans as a people, but I felt that it was imperative, in the position in which I was placed, that I should approach this problem with as broad and as fair a frame of mind as possible. There was more than enough vindictiveness in the air, and I felt that there was a very great need for caution over what could all too easily become vengeance. What we had suffered at the hands of the Germans during the war, and what we had discovered when we occupied Germany, were enough to encourage the cries for vengeance, but they had to be stilled if we were to achieve at least the relief of the very great burden on the shoulders of our own people of propping up the Germans.<sup>57</sup>

Douglas' relatively tolerant attitude towards former members of the Nazi Party may have been influenced by his self-image as a professional airman and his identification with the German fighter pilots he had fought against in the First World War, believing that they shared similar values, such as individual bravery and a 'swashbuckling attitude to life'. He wrote favourably about the exploits of both British and German fighter pilots during the war<sup>58</sup> and of his admiration for 'the famous German ace Ernst Udet'.<sup>59</sup> They met in the Sudan when Udet had to make a forced landing after filming wild animals in Kenya. They compared experiences as fighter pilots on the Western Front and Douglas wrote later that he 'came to appreciate [Udet's] honesty and sincerity'.<sup>60</sup> Udet's death in November 1941 gave him 'cause for feelings of a distinct personal sadness'.<sup>61</sup> Together with Hermann Goering and Edward Milch, Udet was one of three former German First World War pilots responsible for rebuilding the *Luftwaffe* in the 1930s.<sup>62</sup>

Douglas felt an even greater affinity for the head of the *Luftwaffe*, Hermann Goering, writing later that Goering's 'experiences in the air service had run along lines that were curiously parallel to my own.' Goering was born in 1893, the same year as Douglas, and there were

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<sup>56</sup> See for example Henry E. Collins, *Mining memories and Musings: Autobiography of a Mining Engineer* (Ashire Publishing Ltd, 1985), pp39ff. Collins was a professional mining engineer and the Director of Coal Production in the British Zone from 1945-7. He wrote in relation to the proposed denazification of 'lower grade' former Nazis in managerial positions in the industry: 'In November 1945, I was consulted on a list of persons to be arrested as important Nazis. I was horrified to see a number of names of key men in the coal industry... I was able to have the names erased from the list because the persons concerned were vital to the recovery of coal production.'

<sup>57</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p325

<sup>58</sup> Douglas, *Years of Combat*, p111ff

<sup>59</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p154

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, pp24-26

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p154

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p48

similarities in their family background. In 1915, Douglas wrote, Goering was 'doing exactly the same kind of work I was from across the other side of the lines.'<sup>63</sup> Douglas speculated what might have happened had he shot him down in one of their many encounters:

Whatever his subsequent crimes, Goering as a young man was undoubtedly a brave and good fighter pilot. I have wondered many times about the extent to which the course of history might have been changed if, in one of our encounters in the air at this time, I had managed to draw a bead on him long enough to finish him off. It would later have saved the world, and me, a lot of trouble many years later.<sup>64</sup>

These remarks about Goering did not imply that Douglas sympathised with the Nazis, or with Goering's conduct of the war in the air, but the fate of someone who had performed a similar role to his was, as he wrote later, 'almost of personal concern to me.'<sup>65</sup> Other British military commanders showed similar concerns for German generals they had fought against. General Horrocks, for example, visited Rundstedt in prison after the war 'to fight some of the battles over again with him'<sup>66</sup> and Alec Bishop took steps to improve living conditions in Werl prison where Kesselring and other German generals were held.<sup>67</sup>

As the British member of the Allied Control Council, Douglas had to hear appeals for clemency and mitigation of the death sentences imposed by the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, including that on Goering. He took 'the strongest exception' to being told by Bevin that he could not use his discretion but had to follow instructions from the government in London.<sup>68</sup> In particular he objected to being prevented from following his conscience, when German generals were sentenced to death on the basis that they had accepted orders, instead of following their conscience. The dilemma he faced was especially acute in the case of Goering. Douglas justified his decision to confirm the death sentence on the basis that Goering had almost certainly known of one atrocity which he felt, as a former pilot, affected him personally – the shooting of British airmen after their escape from the POW camp, Stalag Luft III – but he still felt uneasy, writing later that:

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<sup>63</sup> Douglas, *Years of Combat*, pp141-2

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p326

<sup>65</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p330

<sup>66</sup> Horrocks, *A Full Life*, p185

<sup>67</sup> IWM, Bishop papers, AB2, three letters from Kesselring to Bishop, dated 1948 and 1950

<sup>68</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p337. Douglas' account in his memoirs is supported by FO 800/466, exchange of telegrams with Bevin, 5-8 Oct. 1946, FO 1060/1388, correspondence between Douglas and Hynd, Aug.-Oct. 1946.



Twenty-eight years before, Goering and I, as young fighter pilots, had fought each other in the cleaner atmosphere of the air. As I spoke the words that meant for Goering an inevitable death sentence, I could not help feeling, for all my loathing of what he had become, the strongest revulsion that I should have to be one of those so directly concerned with it.<sup>69</sup>

When he heard that Goering had committed suicide by taking poison, his reaction was not that Goering had evaded punishment, but some 'slight relief' at the news. Commenting on the decision of the Allied Control Council not to investigate further, he added: 'I was only too glad to be finished with the whole sordid business.'<sup>70</sup>

In addition to war criminals tried at Nuremberg, Douglas had to make the final decision in 'hundreds of cases' tried by British Military courts, where those sentenced to death included not only concentration camp guards and other war criminals, but Polish displaced persons who had shot and killed Germans in revenge attacks or armed robbery after the war, a 'German peasant' ordered by his senior officer to shoot a British parachutist, and a British soldier who had strangled his German girlfriend.<sup>71</sup> In these cases he was allowed to use his discretion and commuted most of the sentences to life imprisonment. He claimed later that his experiences in Germany led to his conviction that the death penalty should be abolished, writing that:

It is one thing to kill a fellow human being in the heat of battle, but these cold, judicial executions were, so far as I was concerned, an entirely different matter.<sup>72</sup>

Colleagues who worked with him in Germany confirmed his account. Alec Bishop wrote later that Douglas found the use of the death penalty 'particularly repugnant.'<sup>73</sup>

Like many others at the time, Douglas did not fully comprehend the true nature and extent of the crimes committed during twelve years of Nazi dictatorship in Germany and Europe. As a result, he focussed on what he believed he understood: his formative experiences as a pilot over the Western front, his knowledge as a 'professional airman', his conscience and understanding of individual morality, and a concern for the fate of those with whom he could

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<sup>69</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p344

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p347

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p359

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p360

<sup>73</sup> Bishop, *Look Back with Pleasure*, p127. See also Lord Pakenham, *Born to Believe*, (London, Jonathan Cape, 1953), pp177-8

identify, such as British POWs shot after escaping from Stalag Luft III, or a former German fighter pilot such as Hermann Goering. He confirmed all the sentences passed by the Nuremberg Tribunal,<sup>74</sup> despite his personal reservations, but felt unprepared and unqualified for a role as Military Governor that included the power of life or death over individuals who had performed a similar role to his in wartime, or for whom he felt some personal sympathy.

### 3.4 Criticism at home and allegations of corruption

*'There was something so inexcusable about the shameful criticism that was expressed of us by our own people at home at that time, and I can still feel the anger that it caused in my own mind. It was all so cheap and shabby.'*<sup>75</sup>

A few days after Douglas arrived in Germany, the Conservative MP Godfrey Nicholson expressed grave concerns in Parliament over 'alarming allegations of corruption' among Military Government staff.<sup>76</sup> The Prime Minister asked the Chiefs of Staff to investigate and they in turn referred the matter to the Control Office in London (COGA) and to Robertson.<sup>77</sup> It emerged that Nicholson's source was a certain Captain R.C. Tarlton, a junior Military Government officer whom Nicholson knew personally. When asked for a written statement, Tarlton could only provide vague and imprecise allegations, such as unnamed Control Commission officers obtaining 'luxury goods' from German manufacturers in exchange for coal allocations, and others who used pre-war connections with German businesses to make 'gains unheard of in the normal business.'<sup>78</sup> Public Safety Branch, the Control Commission internal police force, investigated further and produced a report in October 1946 which dismissed most of the allegations.<sup>79</sup> Robertson wrote that: 'It is quite clear to me that the majority of the allegations made by Tarlton are based on chatter and groundless rumour.'<sup>80</sup> At the end of December Hynd minuted the Prime Minister, a little more circumspectly, that there was 'little substance in the charges' but he was setting up a new organisation under a

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<sup>74</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p330, p343

<sup>75</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p356

<sup>76</sup> *HC Deb 10 May 1946 vol. 422 c1417*

<sup>77</sup> FO 936/743, letter from Hollis (for Chiefs of Staff) to Hynd, 14 May 1946

<sup>78</sup> FO 1030/308, Statement by Ralph C. Tarlton, 17 June 1946

<sup>79</sup> FO 936/743, 12 page report dated 16 Oct. 1946, by T.E. Harris, Public Safety Branch, CID, on 'Alleged Illicit Dealings by Military Government Officers'

<sup>80</sup> FO 936/743, letter from Robertson to Jenkins, 31 Oct. 1946

‘senior detective officer from Scotland Yard’ to continue investigations into ‘alleged malpractices by the staff of the Control Commission in Germany.’<sup>81</sup>

This was the first of many allegations that extended to the highest levels of Military Government, including some of Douglas’ closest colleagues in the RAF.<sup>82</sup> The evidence which has survived in the archives is not sufficient to judge with any degree of certainty whether they were exaggerated, or if they represented the tip of an iceberg, with extensive corruption hidden from public view. The research conducted for this study suggests that, despite official denials, corruption was widespread, but not to the extent claimed by reports in the popular press or by the Conservative opposition in Parliament, who used the issue as a convenient stick to beat the government. A senior official at COGA was probably correct when he minuted on the official report into Tarlton’s claims that:

The upshot has been to reveal a number of things which, to use General Robertson’s words, ‘are not as they should be.’ The matters revealed are very different from the sensational happenings at which Mr. Godfrey Nicholson seemed to be hinting in his speech to the House on 10<sup>th</sup> May. Even so, however, there is little in the report ... to inspire any great confidence.<sup>83</sup>

Allegations included the theft of jewels and cash in May 1945 from *Schloss Glücksburg*,<sup>84</sup> thefts of paintings and antiques from *Villa Hugel*, the former home of the Krupp family converted into the headquarters of the North German Coal Control,<sup>85</sup> and a twelve page internal report into illegal trading by British and US officers, produced in July 1946 by the Economics Information section of the Control Commission.<sup>86</sup>

The report alleged that investigations into the whereabouts of precious stones and metals with an estimated value of £250 million, formerly owned by the Nazi government, had revealed large scale black market activities in stolen works of art, looted museum pieces

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<sup>81</sup> FO 936/743, memo from Hynd to Prime Minister, 9 Dec. 1946

<sup>82</sup> For a highly critical overview of alleged corruption in the British Zone see Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 2001), pp113-132

<sup>83</sup> FO 936/743, comment on the COGA departmental minute sheet initialled M.D. Deputy Secretary [Maurice Dean], 29 Nov. 1946.

<sup>84</sup> Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p119; FO 1032/1370, letter from Tyler to Chief of Staff, 26 Jan. 1949, ‘Claim by Princess Feodora of Schaumburg-Lippe’

<sup>85</sup> Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p119; FO 1067/192-3, ‘Deficiencies at Villa Hugel’

<sup>86</sup> FO 936/741, report on ‘Illegal trading in Germany’, by A.W. Bechter, 17 July 1946

from across Europe, drugs and narcotics.<sup>87</sup> Two senior officers from the Metropolitan Police were sent to Germany to investigate and recommended that:

There is a real need for an organisation to deal with serious crime committed by British Civil and Military personnel. Such crimes include serious 'Black Market' offences and the unlawful disposal and removal of very valuable property from Germany.<sup>88</sup>

A joint British and US exercise codenamed 'Operation Sparkler' had some success in finding a small proportion of the missing precious stones and metals, to the value of £435,642.<sup>89</sup> The final report compiled in April 1947 showed a small increase in the value of materials traced in the British Zone. Results were better in the US Zone, locating property to the value of over \$7 million.<sup>90</sup>

While it is difficult to judge the true extent of major black market activities, there is no doubt that small-scale illegal trading was widespread among British military and Control Commission personnel. Paul Chambers, Head of the Control Commission Finance Department, estimated this cost the Exchequer £41 million,<sup>91</sup> half the estimated net cost of the occupation to the taxpayer in 1946-7. British personnel bought goods cheaply in staff canteens and NAAFI shops, which were reserved for their use only, and sold them on the black market for German *Reichsmarks* (RM).<sup>92</sup> At first, *Reichsmarks* were accepted in British canteens and shops and could be used to buy more goods, or converted into sterling and sent home as money orders. For example, a packet of cigarettes, which cost 1-2 shillings (5-10p) in a British staff canteen, could be sold for 160RM on the black market, worth £4 at the official rate of exchange of 40RM to £1. The practice was partially stopped by issuing British army forces vouchers for use in NAAFI shops but, until currency reform in May 1948, British soldiers and Control Commission staff could live well, by buying goods and services cheaply from the Germans and paying for them with cigarettes sent from home or bought from the NAAFI with vouchers.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, pp6-8

<sup>88</sup> FO 936/741, report by Superintendent Thorp, Metropolitan Police CID, 27 Sept. 1946

<sup>89</sup> FO 936/741, letter from Robertson to Dean, 10 Jan. 1947 and attached 'Interim liquidation report'

<sup>90</sup> FO 936/741, Operation "Sparkler" Final Report, 15 April 1947

<sup>91</sup> Paul Chambers, 'Post-war German Finances', *International Affairs*, Vol.24, No.3 (July 1948), pp364-377

<sup>92</sup> Ibid; See also *Daily Mirror*, p2, 'Viewpoint', 11 July 1946

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. Illegal black and 'grey' market trading was widespread in Britain, as well as Germany, for at least ten years after the war, due to shortages of supplies, rationing and price controls. See Mark Roodhouse, *Black Market Britain, 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Allegations of corrupt practices among military and Control Commission staff were linked in parliamentary debates with more general criticisms of mismanagement, muddle, deteriorating conditions in Germany, and above all, the cost to the British taxpayer. The Conservative opposition leapt on ill-judged remarks by Hugh Dalton in his budget speech in April 1946, which they took as an open invitation to criticise his Labour Party colleague and minister for Germany, John Hynd. Dalton announced that expenditure on Germany and Austria for the coming year was estimated at £80 million, including the net cost of civilian staff, supplies and imports of food for the German population. This was a 'large figure', Dalton said, and

So far, we are getting disappointingly little in return, and that is a matter which may have to be probed in the House one of these days. I am quite sure that the British taxpayer cannot, and should not, much longer be expected to go on paying, on this scale, what are, in effect, reparations to Germany. Speaking as Chancellor of the Exchequer, I grudge the money.<sup>94</sup>

Responding to the Chancellor, Anthony Eden picked up immediately on the idea of 'paying reparations to Germany', adding that he wished to know more and the situation had to be remedied.<sup>95</sup> In two debates called by the Opposition, on 10 May and 29 July 1946, Conservative front bench spokesmen quoted Dalton's budget speech and launched personal attacks on Hynd.<sup>96</sup> One called him a 'minnow floating about amongst the whales', referring to the difference in size and stature between Hynd and the rather larger Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin.<sup>97</sup> Hynd received some support from Labour backbenchers,<sup>98</sup> but little from his party leaders. Attacks on the Control Commission in Parliament continued throughout 1946 and 1947, while Douglas was Military Governor.<sup>99</sup>

In the meantime, the press latched on to the story and sent reporters to Germany to investigate. On 8 July 1946 a full page article appeared in the *Daily Mirror* under the headline '£160 million a Year – to teach the Germans to despise us.'<sup>100</sup> It purported to be the result of a seven week investigation into 'widespread racketeering in the British zone of Germany'

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<sup>94</sup> *HC Deb 09 April 1946 vol. 421 c1818*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, c1849

<sup>96</sup> *HC Deb 10 May 1946 vol. 422 cc1350-447; HC Deb 29 July 1946 vol. 426 cc526-640*

<sup>97</sup> *HC Deb 29 July 1946 vol. 426 cc529-530*

<sup>98</sup> For example from James Hudson, (Ealing), *HC Deb 09 April 1946 vol. 421 c1959*

<sup>99</sup> *HC Deb 22 October 1946 vol 427 cc1487-1623; HC Deb 14 November 1946 vol. 430 cc238-371; HC Deb 05 February 1947 vol. 432 cc1775-916*

<sup>100</sup> *Daily Mirror*, p2, 8 July 1946

based on discussions with a large number of army and Control Commission officers. The article was written in a sensationalist style, with the tone set in the first paragraph:

Lavish supplies of inexpensive drinks and easy, but dirty, money are causing widespread demoralisation and corruption among British personnel in Germany today at the expense of the British taxpayer's pocket and Britain's prestige.<sup>101</sup>

Articles later in the week placed the issue of the cost of the occupation in the wider context of the Allied Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Paris to discuss the future of Germany,<sup>102</sup> reporting Bevin's 'warning' that if no agreement was reached, 'Britain would be obliged so to organise her own zone economically that no continued burden would fall on the British taxpayer.'<sup>103</sup>

Press criticism of the Control Commission continued throughout 1946 and 1947, in up-market liberal journals and newspapers such as the *Manchester Guardian* and *New Statesman* as well as in the popular press.<sup>104</sup> On 8 July 1947 the lead article on the front page of the *Daily Mail* raised the allegations of corruption to a new level, by naming Douglas and three of the most senior RAF officers in Germany as 'assisting inquiries' into the disappearance of old master paintings, Gobelin tapestries, antique furniture, gold and silver plate and cutlery, carpets, china and glassware, from the home of the aristocratic Schaumburg-Lippe family, *Schloss Bückeburg*, which had been requisitioned at the end of the war to serve as headquarters of the British Air Forces of Occupation (BAFO).<sup>105</sup> The allegations affected Douglas directly, as he was the senior officer commanding BAFO from July 1945 to January 1946 and had been based at Bückeburg.<sup>106</sup>

In his memoirs, Douglas wrote that 'vindictive suggestions and personal allegations about looting [were] levelled against even those of us who were in the most senior appointments.'<sup>107</sup> He commissioned a report by 'an officer from Scotland Yard' which, he claimed, 'proved conclusively the falsity of the newspaper attacks'.<sup>108</sup> The report, by

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid

<sup>102</sup> *Daily Mirror*, p1, 'Bevin tells Russia: Germany costing Britain too much', 11 July 1946

<sup>103</sup> *Daily Mirror*, p1, 'Bevin insists "We can't borrow more to aid Germany"', 12 July 1946

<sup>104</sup> FO 371/55578, press cutting from the *Manchester Guardian*, 21 Sep 1946; Thies, 'What is going on in Germany?', p42

<sup>105</sup> Richard Greenhough, 'Spotlight on a prince's fabulous castle', *Daily Mail*, p1, 8 July 1947

<sup>106</sup> Ibid

<sup>107</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p356

<sup>108</sup> Ibid

Inspector Hayward, who conducted the earlier 'Operation Sparkler' investigations, has survived in the archives. It confirmed there was not 'a shred of evidence' Douglas 'ever removed a single article' from Germany.<sup>109</sup> According to the report and related documents, he and other senior British officials received items from *Schloss Bückeburg* which they used to furnish their official residences, but 'with the exception of very minor losses of small articles which can be safely attributed to normal domestic wastage or petty pilfering by staff, all was intact and could be accounted for.'<sup>110</sup> The report, however, stated that a large quantity of material was still missing and, although an RAF investigator had attributed this to petty theft and 'souvenir hunting', in Hayward's view it had probably been subject to large scale removals.<sup>111</sup>

The most serious allegation related to Douglas' predecessor as Commander of British Air Forces in Germany, Sir Arthur Coningham. According to the report, Coningham had arranged for an 'unknown quantity' of silver, porcelain and carpets from *Schloss Bückeburg* to be flown to his villa in Cannes, in July 1945, some of which was returned to Germany in August 1945 and some late in 1947, but, Hayward added: 'we have no means of ascertaining whether all that was originally taken was in fact returned'.<sup>112</sup> An earlier interim report by Hayward alleged that 38 chests of silver had been removed from the *Schloss* to a 'farmhouse' on the estate that Coningham used as his living quarters. Sixteen chests of silver were given to the RAF Welfare branch and made available for use by senior officers and messes. A further quantity of silver and other valuables was packed and 'accompanied' Coningham in his Dakota aeroplane when he left Germany for Cannes. When he arrived he found he had more than he needed, so the silver was re-packed and driven in his Rolls-Royce car to his house in Brussels, from where another officer collected it and returned it to the collection held by Welfare at Bückeburg. At no point, Hayward added, was any inventory made or record kept of the material.<sup>113</sup>

Hayward reported that Douglas told him in July 1947, when he started his enquiries, that while neither he nor two other senior RAF officers had received any property other than that

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<sup>109</sup> FO 936/653, T Hayward, Assistant Inspector General, Public Safety Branch, final report on 'Property of Prince Wolrad of Schaumburg-Lippe missing from Schloss Bückeburg', 30 June 1948

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>113</sup> FO 1032/1461, Hayward, interim report, 30 Dec. 1947

'lawfully requisitioned' for use in their official residences, Coningham was 'open to criticism' for taking material to his house in Cannes.<sup>114</sup> Douglas added he was sure this had been done 'in good faith' and all would be returned in due course,<sup>115</sup> but his comment could be interpreted as an indication to Hayward of the line his inquiry should take. A few days later, Douglas received a letter from Coningham in which he acknowledged that he still had material from Bückeburg in his house, 'Villa Rosalie in the South of France', and now wished to 'return sundry articles of German furniture and equipment which were sent down there at the end of the war.'<sup>116</sup>

The matter ended tragically. In January 1948, before Hayward completed his final report, Coningham vanished without trace when his aircraft, including all crew and passengers, crashed into the sea near Bermuda.<sup>117</sup> Robertson was approached by the chief of the RAF Police, who asked if he could inform Lady Coningham, who was naturally distressed at her husband's sudden death, that 'as far as Sir Arthur is concerned, the allegations are without foundation'.<sup>118</sup> Robertson declined the request, replying that while he hoped this would be the case, it would be wrong to prejudge the outcome of the report.<sup>119</sup>

The files show that there had been disagreements dating back to 1945 between the RAF and local Control Commission branches, nominally responsible for the property. It was possibly unfortunate for the RAF officers that Prince Wolrad, the owner of the estate, had been a member of the paramilitary *Stahlhelm* organisation which merged with the Nazi SA after Hitler came to power in 1933.<sup>120</sup> He was therefore subject to automatic arrest at the start of the occupation and management of his property was transferred to the Control Commission's Property Control Branch, pending denazification proceedings. According to Hayward, the branch 'did in fact take charge of his financial affairs but were prevented from exercising control of the personal property by the attitude of the R.A.F. who claimed that it

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid

<sup>115</sup> Ibid

<sup>116</sup> FO 1032/1371, letter from Coningham to Douglas, 30 July 1947

<sup>117</sup> Vincent Orange, *Coningham, A Biography of Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham KCB, KBE, DSO, MC, DFC, AFC* (London: Methuen, 1990), p250

<sup>118</sup> FO 1032/1461, letter from de Putron to Robertson, 10 Feb. 1948

<sup>119</sup> FO 1032/1461, letter from Westropp, who was dealing with the case for Robertson, to de Putron, 27 Feb. 1948

<sup>120</sup> FO 1032/1371, memo from Petterson, Regional Economic Officer to Lingham, Acting Regional Commissioner, 13 July 1947, enclosing 'Report on the Estate of Prince Wolrad at Schaumburg-Lippe as at 7 July 1947' by E.S. Hawarth, Property Control Branch; FO 1032/1370, memo from Goff to Parker, 8 July 1947 'Prince Wolrad's Estate in Schaumburg-Lippe'



had been properly requisitioned for their use.’<sup>121</sup> A report by a Property Control Officer dated 7 July 1947, the day before the *Daily Mail* article appeared, was highly critical of the RAF, naming several senior officers including Douglas and Coningham.<sup>122</sup>

Files on the refurbishment of Douglas’ official residence, *Schloss Ostenwalde*, formerly used by Montgomery, include a receipt for 72 items of silver and furniture from Bückeburg, and for a small number of items requisitioned from other stately homes.<sup>123</sup> There is no evidence that any material was taken for his personal use, but Douglas and his wife appeared to have a taste for grand living that was in contrast with the dislike for pomp and ceremony he later claimed in his memoirs.<sup>124</sup> A letter from the brigadier responsible stated that redecoration had to be of the highest standard as ‘visiting royalty will be entertained at the schloss.’<sup>125</sup> A swimming pool was required and provided by army engineers.<sup>126</sup> A large quantity of furniture was also ordered, to the designs of a Mr Dohler in Berlin, who had worked for other British officials. Wildfowling was arranged on a nearby lake and two guns reserved for Douglas and ‘visiting VIPs’, roads to the residence were repaired, but arrangements to construct a new chimney and open fireplace in the library had to be postponed due to other building priorities.<sup>127</sup>

The evidence available is far from complete, but suggests that, while there is no reason to believe that Douglas exploited the situation for his personal gain or removed any items of value from Germany, he appears to have known of other senior officers who did so and did little to stop it. He also appears to have had little regard for official procedures in his own dealings. When he complained that Dohler had not been paid for furniture ordered from him, Paul Chambers, head of Finance Division, wrote a terse reply suggesting he should have followed ‘normal channels’:

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<sup>121</sup> FO 936/653, Hayward, final report, 30 June 1948

<sup>122</sup> FO 1032/1371, ‘Report on the Estate of Prince Wolrad at Schaumburg-Lippe as at 7 July 1947’

<sup>123</sup> FO 1030/151, receipt for 72 items of silverware and furniture ‘taken’ [crossed out and replaced by hand with ‘requisitioned’] by Lady Douglas on 25 Sept. 1946. Also receipts for a painting from *Schloss Bückeburg*, and a receipt for pictures from *Villa Hugel*.

<sup>124</sup> Douglas, *Years of Command*, p318

<sup>125</sup> FO 1030/151, letter from Brigadier A/Q to HQ BAOR and others on ‘Military Governor’s residence’, 9 May 1946

<sup>126</sup> FO 1030/171, note expressing satisfaction for the hard work done by the sappers on the swimming pool at Ostenwalde, 23 June 1947

<sup>127</sup> FO 1030/151; FO 1030/171

There is in this country, as at home, a regular procedure for the authorisation and payment of work, the cost of which has to be borne by the public purse and where that procedure is not followed delay and irregularity is likely to occur.<sup>128</sup>

More generally, it would appear that corruption, petty theft and, in some cases, large scale illegal activities were widespread in parts of the military forces of occupation and the Control Commission. On the other hand, from 1946 onwards, the Control Commission branches responsible for establishing and enforcing controls appear to have become reasonably effective and were prepared to investigate cases at the highest levels, with support from politicians in London. Inspector Hayward's report did not result in further prosecutions, but was shown to Lord Henderson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, who commented that:

Mr Hayward's report makes very disturbing reading. R.A.F. administration is shewn to be casual and negligent and to say the least, there is an atmosphere of irresponsibility about the whole business. It is a pity the enquiry could not be carried to a successful conclusion.<sup>129</sup>

The worst abuses occurred in the chaotic conditions of 1945, before the Control Commission was fully established in Germany. By 1946, issuing receipts and compiling inventories of items requisitioned appeared to have become standard practice.<sup>130</sup> Property Control Branch, continued to compile inventories of material from *Schloss Bückeburg* and attempted to trace missing items until 1949.<sup>131</sup> In January 1948, Robertson, now Military Governor, refused a request from the Chief of RAF Police to suspend Hayward's enquiry 'until every effort has been made to trace the bulk of this property and to bring to book any who may be responsible for the disappearances of large quantities of it.'<sup>132</sup> It proved impossible to recover material stolen more than two years earlier, but the corruption issue, which had tainted Douglas' Military Governorship, appeared to have been brought under control.

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<sup>128</sup> FO 1030/151, letter from Chambers to Douglas, 7 Oct. 1946

<sup>129</sup> FO 936/653, note from Lord Henderson to Strang, 31 July 1948

<sup>130</sup> Lady Douglas, for example, issued an official receipt for the 72 items she requested from Bückeburg on 25 Sept. 1946.

<sup>131</sup> FO 1046/201, 'Report for Director, Property Control Branch relative to claim for compensation for missing items' by E.S. Haworth, 2 March 1949

<sup>132</sup> FO 1032/1461, letter from Robertson to O'Rourke, Inspector General, Public Safety, 2 Jan. 1948

### 3.5 Conclusion

Douglas left Germany on 1 November 1947. Earlier in the year in May, following press reports that he was going to resign, he wrote to Bevin that, rather than going when times were tough, 'as a rat leaving a supposedly sinking ship', he was prepared to stay as long as Bevin wished.<sup>133</sup> In June, however, Attlee and Bevin agreed he should go and be replaced by Robertson, who had turned down an earlier offer from Montgomery of an appointment as Quartermaster General, on a tacit understanding that in due course he would be promoted to Military Governor.<sup>134</sup>

There was no suggestion in the files that the decision was influenced by the *Schloss Bückeburg*, or other allegations. Pakenham, who replaced Hynd as Minister for Germany in April 1947, had a high regard for Douglas and recommended he be given a peerage. The recommendation was endorsed by Bevin, on the grounds that it would provide a clear demonstration of the government's support for the Control Commission and so improve staff morale. Moreover, as a Labour Party supporter, Douglas could be useful in the House of Lords.<sup>135</sup> He was enobled, as Lord Kirtleside, in the 1948 New Year Honours. In March 1949, following the nationalisation of civil aviation, he was appointed Chairman of BEA, (British European Airways), where he remained for fifteen years and was considered one of the most successful chairmen of a nationalised industry, overseeing the airline's growth from 750,000 passengers in 1949 to 5.6 million in 1964.<sup>136</sup>

Sholto Douglas illustrates some of the contrasts in the British occupation. He tried to improve living conditions for the German population<sup>137</sup> and fulfilled his responsibilities as Military Governor to the best of his abilities, despite his evident personal dislike of the job. At the same time, if not directly involved, he turned a blind eye to illegal activities undertaken by some of his colleagues, who exploited the chaotic situation in Germany for their own benefit. He did not share the 'missionary idealism' of Montgomery and the army generals, nor their idealistic vision of the British Empire as a force for good in the world, but pursued pragmatic policies to reduce the cost of the occupation to the British taxpayer and, so far as he could,

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<sup>133</sup> FO 936/425, handwritten letter from Douglas to Bevin, 15 May 1947

<sup>134</sup> FO 936/425, memo from Bevin to Attlee, 20 June 1947

<sup>135</sup> FO 936/425, memo from Bevin to Prime Minister, 6 Oct. 1947

<sup>136</sup> Orange, 'Douglas', *DNB*

<sup>137</sup> See for example letters from Douglas on housing conditions in the Zone in FO1030/188, to Deputy Military Governor (Robertson), 3 July 1946, Service chiefs, 5 Oct. 1946 and McCreery, 17 Nov. 1946

promote economic revival. As the British member of the Allied Control Council, he confirmed the death sentence imposed on Hermann Goering and other Nazi leaders condemned to death at Nuremberg, but had doubts about the legality of the proceedings and later supported the abolition of capital punishment.

The issue of corruption among British military and Control Commission personnel has been covered at some length in this chapter, but this should not imply that theft and looting by the British in Germany was comparable to earlier wartime looting on a far greater scale, by Germans in Nazi occupied Europe, or to the theft and looting of Jewish property within Germany. However, the issue of corruption during the British occupation is important for two reasons. Firstly, the debate in the House of Commons in May 1946 marked the start of a period of transition, in which the British in Germany lost the moral high ground, not in their own eyes, but in the eyes of many of those at home, and in the eyes of Germans who read the articles in British newspapers which criticised the occupation. It was difficult to ask Germans to emulate the British democratic 'way of life' when some prominent Britons appeared so obviously not to practice what they preached. Secondly, it provides a different perspective, which contrasts with the narrative presented by Montgomery, Robertson and Bishop, of a benevolent occupation that contributed to a democratic and prosperous West Germany. That may have been the outcome when viewed from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s but, to many observers in Britain in 1946 and 1947, the occupation appeared corrupt, muddled, poorly managed and, despite good intentions, likely to sow the seeds of a third world war.<sup>138</sup> This study suggests that both were correct to some degree and one view does not necessarily exclude the other.

Robertson continued to issue the occasional exhortation to his staff, such as his speech on 31 July 1947 reminding them why they were in Germany,<sup>139</sup> but after Dalton's budget speech in April, the Commons debates in May and July 1946 and criticism in the press, the occupation was perceived by many in Britain to be part of the problem, not the solution. Military Government policy remained the same, but the emphasis changed, from staying in Germany as long as necessary to change German culture and society, to reducing costs,

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<sup>138</sup> *HC Deb 05 February 1947 vol. 432 cc1775-916*, opening speech by the Conservative spokesman, Richard Law, in the Adjournment debate on Germany

<sup>139</sup> FO 1030/329, 'Verbatim notes of speech by Deputy Military Governor to Staff', 31 July 1947, in which he told them they were 'the Empire builders ... the Empire of true democracy'.

provided this could be done without chaos, communism or a Nazi revival. Despite this change in emphasis, many idealistic individuals remained in Germany and did what they could to further the original aims for which they believed Britain had fought the war and established the occupation. The next three chapters discuss four civilian administrators who, in different ways, promoted their own concept of democracy and political renewal in Germany.

## **Part II**

### **Political renewal:**

#### **Four civilian diplomats and administrators**

#### 4 Harold Ingrams: 'Trying to beat the swastika into the parish pump': July 1945 – August 1946

*'We are trying to beat the swastika into the parish pump  
and the parish council does not go to war.'*<sup>1</sup>



Harold Ingrams, date unknown, probably 1930s<sup>2</sup>

Harold Ingrams was a former colonial official who was appointed head of the Administration and Local Government (ALG) branch of the British Control Commission for Germany. He and his colleagues in the branch believed that it was not sufficient to abolish Nazi structures and practices and return to the pre-1933 system of local government in Germany; Weimar democracy was fundamentally flawed and had to be changed, as it had not prevented the Nazi seizure of power. Ingrams believed that British democracy was the best in the world, and the only practical way to reform German local government was to replace it with as much as possible of the British system, as he perceived it.

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<sup>1</sup> Churchill Archives Centre, Ingrams Papers (henceforward IP) 1/1, lecture on 'Regional and Local Government in Germany: Now and the Future', Feb. 1946

<sup>2</sup> Photograph from G. Rex Smith, "Ingrams Peace", Haḡramawt, 1937-40. Some Contemporary Documents', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol.12, No.1, (April, 2002), p2

Ingrams' attempt to impose structural administrative reforms was not typical of British policy in other areas<sup>3</sup> and has been considered a failure by historians,<sup>4</sup> but the arguments he used to justify the attempt are relevant to a study of British aims in occupied Germany, as they provide a clear example of how idealistic notions of the British Empire as a force for good in the world, and a belief in the intrinsic superiority of the British 'way of life', influenced occupation practice in at least one important area – local government and the promotion of democracy – as well as permeating the rhetoric of those at the top of the administration.<sup>5</sup>

Ingrams' perception of a robust parish democracy in Britain was similar in some respects to that of Sidney and Beatrice Webb and their successors at the London School of Economics (LSE). The Webbs believed that an 'extra-legal democracy' had been established in some localities in Britain by the early nineteenth century, and regretted that this model had not been extended more widely in the 1830s, when municipal boroughs were reformed and rural parishes ceased to be an effective unit of local government.<sup>6</sup> However, Ingrams had no practical experience of local government and his application of the British model to Germany was heavily influenced by his experience of imperial rule, a textbook understanding of classical democracy and a nostalgic view of the rural British parish he may have acquired from his clergyman father. As a result, he attempted to impose an antiquated perception of British 'parish pump' village democracy on post-war Germany. He had an idealistic view of a leisured class of individuals meeting together after attending Church on Sunday to discuss and resolve their problems. He believed that independent 'men of goodwill' should take responsibility for public works and activities in their communities, such as keeping the streets clean, rather than depending on political parties to represent their views, or relying on professional officials appointed by the state.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In Education and Press policy and, most notably, the creation of new constitutions for the *Länder* and subsequently for the Federal Republic, the British abolished Nazi structures and practices, but were reluctant to impose structural reforms, preferring to leave the initiative to the Germans, offer what they considered to be constructive advice, and reserve the right to block or veto measures they disapproved of.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Wolfgang Rudzio, *Die Neuordnung des Kommunalwesens in der Britischen Zone* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1968); Reusch, *Deutsches Berufsbeamtentum*

<sup>5</sup> This study focusses on British motivation, aims and intentions. It does not attempt a full discussion of local government reform in post-war Germany. This would require a discussion of the tradition of German local and regional self-government, dating back to the reforms of Freiherr von Stein in the early nineteenth century, the relationship between local government and the state, the position and function of the Civil Service and the role of the political parties, all of which are beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>6</sup> Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The Parish and the County* (London: Frank Cass, 1963). First published in 1906

<sup>7</sup> Ingrams' views were similar in some ways to those of Ralf Dahrendorf and German *Sonderweg* historians of the 1960s and 1970s, who attributed the 'pathological' political developments in Germany in the twentieth century to a supposed failure to develop a strong 'civil society' and culture of voluntary association, as occurred in nineteenth



The arguments Ingrams used to justify his proposed reforms – the intrinsic superiority of British democracy and his colonial experience of introducing it overseas – did not convince members of the German Working Parties convened to discuss his proposals. They agreed with many of his aims, but disagreed with his methods. Most of his specific reforms were never fully implemented or were rolled back in later years. Yet, despite this apparent failure, arguably these early attempts at democratic reform were part of a successful ‘learning process’,<sup>8</sup> which resulted in the progressive democratisation and liberalisation of post-war German politics and society. A short-term failure, by promoting debate and dialogue, contributed to long-term success.

#### 4.1 Harold Ingrams: colonial administrator

*‘My main experience and interests lie in the Middle East’*<sup>9</sup>

Ingrams’ personal background was similar to that of Field-Marshal Montgomery and Generals Robertson and Bishop. He was born in 1897, the same year as Bishop and one year later than Robertson. His father was a clergyman and assistant master at Shrewsbury School.<sup>10</sup> He fought and was wounded in France in the First World War. He joined the Colonial Service in 1919 and was posted to Zanzibar, Mauritius and Arabia, where he served with great distinction.<sup>11</sup> In 1936 he brokered a peace agreement between warring Bedouin tribes in Southern Yemen, which is still known as the ‘Ingrams Peace.’<sup>12</sup> During the war he served in various senior diplomatic posts in the Middle East, in Aden and the southern

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century Britain. Jose Harris has offered a critique of this view from a British perspective, highlighting the exclusion of various minority groups from mainstream British society and the variability in the use of the term ‘Civil Society’ in different cultural contexts. See Jose Harris, ‘Introduction: Civil Society in British History: Paradigm or Peculiarity’ in Jose Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History*, pp1-12. More recently Helen McCarthy and Pat Thane, ‘The Politics of Association in British Society’, *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.22, No.2, (2011), pp217-229, have examined a later period and suggested that strong traditions of voluntary association in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s may have contributed to the ‘unusual stability’ of British society in the interwar years.

<sup>8</sup> The concept of democracy as a ‘learning process’ has been taken from Ulrich Herbert, ‘Liberalisierung als Lernprozeß. Die Bundesrepublik in der deutschen Geschichte – eine Skizze’ in Ulrich Herbert (ed.), *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland: Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945-1980* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002), pp7-49

<sup>9</sup> IP 6/5, confidential memo on ‘The anomalous position of the Branch’, 20 July 1946

<sup>10</sup> A leading English public school

<sup>11</sup> Roger T. Stearn, ‘Ingrams, (William) Harold (1897–1973)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004 (henceforward Stearn, ‘Ingrams’, *DNB*) [<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.oxford.ac.uk/view/article/46523>, accessed 25 Oct 2011]

<sup>12</sup> G. Rex Smith, ‘Ingrams Peace’, Hadramawt, 1937-40. Some Contemporary Documents’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol.12, No.1, (April, 2002), pp1-30

Arabian Peninsula.<sup>13</sup> He was seconded by the Colonial Office in July 1945 to the Administration and Local Government (ALG) branch of the Control Commission for Germany and in December that year was made head of branch.<sup>14</sup> He stayed in Germany for just over a year, leaving in August 1946.<sup>15</sup>

Ingrams was an influential member of the British Control Commission, chairing working parties on local government and electoral procedure.<sup>16</sup> He was also the British member of the Allied Control Council sub-committee on governmental structure and participated in bilateral meetings with his US counterpart in July 1946 to consider greater coordination between the British and US zones.<sup>17</sup> Although he reported to the Deputy Military Governor, General Robertson, through a brigadier who was initially his head of branch, and General Philip Balfour, head of the Internal Affairs and Communication division of the Control Commission, he discussed many issues directly with Robertson.

It is difficult to judge the extent to which Ingrams originated policy, as well as being responsible for its implementation. In an early study published in 1968,<sup>18</sup> Wolfgang Rudzio claimed that British local government policy was largely determined by Professor William A. Robson, an expert in public administration at the LSE,<sup>19</sup> who advised Control Commission staff while they were based in London. Rudzio's claim may be exaggerated, as although Robson was a highly respected figure and his ideas were undoubtedly influential,<sup>20</sup> he played no part in the work of the Control Commission after they left Britain for Germany in July 1945. Ingrams' personal papers show he thought through many issues for himself, but his conclusions were often similar to those described in other contemporary sources<sup>21</sup> and he may have been influenced by his colleagues in the branch.

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<sup>13</sup> Stearn, 'Ingrams', *DNB*

<sup>14</sup> IP 6/5, confidential memo, 'The anomalous position of the Branch', 20 July 1946

<sup>15</sup> Harold Ingrams, *Seven across the Sahara*, (London: John Murray, 1949), p2. His DNB entry is incorrect in stating that he left Germany in 1947.

<sup>16</sup> FO 1050/806; 1050/181; 1050/160; 1050/1040; IP 2/2; 3/5; 3/7; 4/5

<sup>17</sup> IP 5/8

<sup>18</sup> Rudzio, *Die Neuordnung des Kommunalwesens*, pp44-5

<sup>19</sup> Bernard Crick, 'Robson, William Alexander (1895–1980)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2010

[<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/catalogue/ulrls.lon.ac.uk/view/article/31622>, accessed 25 Oct 2011]

<sup>20</sup> Robson published his views in two articles: W.A. Robson, 'Local Government in Occupied Germany', *The Political Quarterly*, Vol.XIV, No.4, Oct-Dec 1945, pp277-287; William A. Robson, 'Local Government in Germany: A background to municipal elections', *The Times*, 11 Sept. 1946, p5

<sup>21</sup> E.g. J.M. Cobban, 'Reviving Local Government', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.6, 8 Dec. 1945, p8

Ingrams agreed with his British colleagues that the pre-Nazi German system was undemocratic and should be changed, but the rhetoric he used to justify his proposed reforms was distinctive and reflected his personal background and experience. Robson saw the problem in organisational and structural terms, claiming that local government in Weimar Germany was fundamentally undemocratic, due to the privileged position of the bureaucracy, executive power vested in senior elected local officials such as town and city mayors (*Bürgermeister*), and local authorities acting as an arm of the state with accompanying police and regulatory powers.<sup>22</sup> The 'established bureaucracy' Robson argued, was one of the 'four pillars' of Nazi rule, the others being the Party, the Army and the large industrialists.<sup>23</sup> Ingrams, while not disagreeing with the need for structural reforms and a complete break with the past, believed that democracy was essentially a matter of individual behaviour with its basis in Christian morality.<sup>24</sup>

## 4.2 Echoes of empire and 'missionary idealism'

*'In my experience nothing is more sure than that if you give responsibility to people they are likely to exercise it properly. I have seen this constantly in Colonial Administrations...'*<sup>25</sup>

Not content with repealing Nazi laws and restoring the German local and regional administrative system as it had been in 1933 before Hitler came to power, Ingrams acted as if he were a secular missionary for democracy, as he understood it. He decided that, as far as possible, the British model of local government should be introduced in Germany. He assumed that the British 'way of life' represented the essence of democracy and was the 'antithesis' of the German system.<sup>26</sup> The Weimar system of democracy had 'proved an easy prey for the Nazis' and 'to restore the pre-1933 system could be nothing more than ineffectual patch-work.'<sup>27</sup> Above all, he believed it was essential to make it as difficult as

<sup>22</sup> Robson, 'Local Government in Occupied Germany'

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p284

<sup>24</sup> E.g. IP 3/7, 'Lecture given by Mr W. H. Ingrams, CMG, OBE, Adm & Local Gov Branch, IA & C Div to Mil Gov Comds during Nov 45.'

<sup>25</sup> IP 2/1, letter from Ingrams to Philip Balfour, 20 Sept. 1945, 'Developments in Hamburg'

<sup>26</sup> Harold Ingrams, 'Building democracy in Germany', *The Quarterly Review*, No. 572, (April 1947), p209

<sup>27</sup> IP 1/1, draft notes dated Jan 1946 for a lecture on 'Regional and local govt under the Nazis'

possible for anyone in Germany to re-establish the authoritarian *Führerprinzip* or 'leadership principle' which Hitler had made the basis of Nazi society.<sup>28</sup>

Soon after he arrived in Germany, Ingrams recorded his thoughts on the implications of the October 1944 policy directives issued to senior British officials in Germany as a Military Government handbook.<sup>29</sup> Apart from a general requirement to promote decentralisation and the development of local responsibility,<sup>30</sup> the directives provided no guidance on local government and administration. Possibly reflecting a point of view he had learned at school or from his father, Ingrams wrote that true democracy was based on Christian principles, and the biblical 'thou shalt not' of the Old Testament must be replaced by, in his words, 'the principle of duty towards one's neighbour', adding that 'if we are to change German methods our only yardstick is our own system.'<sup>31</sup> This sentence embodied three principles he stuck to throughout his time in Germany: the need for a fundamental change to the former German system; his belief that the essence of democracy lay not in collective social or political structures or institutions, but in personal relations between individuals conducted in a spirit of Christian morality; and a conviction, based on his imperial experience, that the only practicable way forward was to introduce as much of the British model of democracy into Germany as possible, as this was not only 'the most robust in the world' but the kind of democracy he and his British colleagues knew and understood best.

The same fundamental principles were expressed in different ways in many other documents. In February 1946 he prepared a one page paper with the title 'On Promoting Democracy in Germany' which he showed to General Robertson, the Deputy Military Governor. According to Ingrams, Robertson 'read it through carefully and then passed it back saying, with some emphasis "I agree with every word if it."' <sup>32</sup> The paper was printed as the Foreword to a revised edition of the directive on local government issued the same

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<sup>28</sup> IP 1/8. Preamble to the 'German Municipal Code' (Deutsche Gemeindeordnung), a 26 page printed booklet with parallel text in English and German, issued as an appendix to Military Government ordinance No 21. See also Ingrams, 'Building democracy in Germany', p209

<sup>29</sup> IP 6/5, 'Note for file'. An identical copy of the note dated 24 July is in IP 2/1 and an undated handwritten version in IP 4/7. Ingrams' copy of the October 1944 directives is in IP 1/8.

<sup>30</sup> IP 1/8, Policy Directives for Allied C-in-Cs. Directive No. 1, Appendix A, 'Draft Directive on Treatment of Germany in the Initial Post-Defeat Period,' UK re-draft of US draft directive

<sup>31</sup> IP 6/5, 'Note for file'

<sup>32</sup> IP 2/1, letter from Ingrams to Balfour, 19 February 1946, with a one page paper entitled 'On Promoting Democracy in Germany'

month and circulated widely to Control Commission staff.<sup>33</sup> The views Ingrams expressed were therefore endorsed at the highest level by the Deputy Military Governor, issued as part of an official publication and can be considered typical of many of the older generation of British officers, diplomats and senior administrators in Germany.

Ingrams' colonial experience led him to the view that the 'character of a people' depended on their physical environment and determined their social and political organisation. He wrote in the paper that:

Our democracy, the most robust in the world, is the product of our character and our country. It is on British soil that it flourishes best but we do export it and tended carefully it grows and flourishes in diverse lands, even if it takes a long time to acclimatise itself.<sup>34</sup>

British democracy, he believed, was based on the superior character of the British people and on Christianity. It was their duty to set an example to the Germans (who if not British were at least Christian) by practising it themselves and, in so doing, encouraging the Germans to adopt the same beliefs, values and standards of behaviour:

The democracy we seek to establish is based on Christianity, the fulfilment of our duty towards our neighbours. The welfare of everyone of us is the concern of each of us and this is the idea which we have to practise ourselves and help the Germans to practice in each other and to us.<sup>35</sup>

In November 1945 Ingrams went on a lecture tour, in which he explained the thinking behind the newly released directive on local government to the commanders of British Military Government units across the zone. In the lecture, he stressed the difficulty of 'selling democracy in extremely trying economic conditions' but also the opportunity, even greater than that of a former conqueror, Napoleon, to introduce administrative reform in Germany.<sup>36</sup> He told his audience that Government was the concern of every individual man and woman and it was 'to the individual in the first place we have to turn our attention'. He described the

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<sup>33</sup> The first edition of the directive, issued on Sept. 15 1945, is in FO 1050/423 'Military Government Directive on Administrative, Local and Regional Government and the Public Services: Part 1 'Democratisation and Decentralisation of Local and Regional Government'. The second edition dated 1 Feb. 1946, with Ingrams' introduction, is in Churchill Archives Centre, Albu papers (henceforward AP), Box 10

<sup>34</sup> IP 2/1, 'On Promoting Democracy in Germany'. Ingrams expressed similar views in *Seven across the Sahara*, e.g. p207, 'Christianity and democracy always go well together in agricultural country, just as Islam and democracy do in more barren lands.'

<sup>35</sup> IP 2/1, 'On Promoting Democracy in Germany'

<sup>36</sup> IP 3/7, 'Lecture given by Mr W. H. Ingrams, CMG, OBE, Adm & Local Gov Branch, IA & C Div to Mil Gov Comds during Nov 45.' The programme for the lecture tour, to 7 major towns in the British Zone, from 10 to 23 November 1945, is in IP 4/7

British role in Germany as similar to that of a doctor with a patient, though, in some ways, his words read as though the role he had in mind was that of priest and sinner, or missionary and potential convert.<sup>37</sup> He later elaborated on the idea of the colonial administrator as a secular missionary, not specifically in Germany, but throughout the Empire. The colonial administrator, he wrote, should not claim to possess 'the whole monopoly of truth and the only fold in which there is salvation.' The administrator's role was not to convert the heathen, but to bring peace, prosperity and democracy to the inhabitants of other nations. His task was 'to help in achieving that peace, and happiness too, which is promised to men of goodwill of whatever faith they be.'<sup>38</sup>

Ingrams did not perceive the British Empire as weak or in decline. After leaving Germany in 1946, he was appointed Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, modern Ghana. In an account of his journey to take up the post, published in 1949, he provided an insight into what we might call his personal philosophy of empire.<sup>39</sup> He wrote in classic imperial terms of how the British went to Africa and Asia, in the same way that Julius Caesar and St Augustine had come to England two thousand years earlier, to bring 'the civilisation of Rome and Christian faith to these lands'.<sup>40</sup> He was not, however, an old-fashioned imperialist. His experience travelling overland across the Sahara through British and French colonial territories confirmed his view that the old order could not last for ever; it was no longer possible to 'build slowly on a foundation of native institutions'<sup>41</sup> and there was a need to actively promote economic development and political reform.<sup>42</sup> He hoped that 'men of goodwill' would learn to work together and if the imperial power helped those in the colonies manage their own affairs 'the bonds of friendship so forged will be stronger than any between a conquering nation and subject peoples.'<sup>43</sup>

In practice, of course, the Empire did not evolve as he hoped. Instead of forging 'bonds of friendship', independence in many former colonies, including India, Malaya, Burma, Palestine and South Africa, was achieved after a bitter struggle or followed by dictatorship

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Ingrams, *Seven across the Sahara*, p85

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p16

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p211

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p195

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, px-xi

and civil war rather than peace, prosperity and democracy. In Southern Yemen, where Ingrams felt a special affinity with the people after working there from 1934 to 1944, the British were forced to leave in 1967 after a violent four year anti-colonial uprising and war of independence known, euphemistically, as the 'Aden Emergency'.

Ingrams' ideal view of British democracy based on Christian principles represented, at best, a partial view of history, which ignored rotten boroughs and the widespread corruption in British politics before the 1832 Reform Act, or the inequalities in British society. In his emphasis on the role of the individual and an accompanying distrust of political parties, he seemed to hark back to an imagined idyllic rural past, when everyone knew each other and the Anglican village parish church was the focus of community life. To quote again from his lecture in November 1945 to Control Commission staff:

the real strength of local government in England, which is very constantly described as the home of local government, resides ... in the parish; and the strength of the parish was originally in that Christian life of collective organisation for mutual help which centred round, and was often directed by, the Church.<sup>44</sup>

This was an antiquated, pre-industrial, view of democracy dating back over a hundred years to the eighteenth century.

English public schools placed a strong emphasis on the classic Greek and Roman texts, which may explain Ingrams' belief that the purest form of democracy was similar to that of ancient Athens, where citizens spoke for themselves rather than through elected representatives. Idealistically, he attempted to preserve these principles in the smaller *Gemeinden*, or parish communities, in Germany:

Democracy in England is found in an almost pure form in the parish meeting, and in the smaller *Gemeinden* this was the case in Germany. Any *Gemeinde* which had less than 40 electors had a *Gemeindeversammlung* [parish meeting] where each elector spoke and voted for himself. This we have preserved...<sup>45</sup>

He added that German parish meetings were 'under the complete control of their feudal lords,' unlike the robust self-government of the English parishes.<sup>46</sup> This was another partial

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<sup>44</sup> IP 3/7, lecture given by Ingrams during Nov. 1945

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

understanding of history. In established churches in rural Britain in the eighteenth century, attendance at Sunday service often reflected an authoritarian and hierarchical social order,<sup>47</sup> rather than 'robust self-government'. As Sidney and Beatrice Webb wrote, the most common form of parish government in rural districts, before the administrative reforms at the start of the nineteenth century, was a 'parish oligarchy' in which:

Official relationships between the parties were inextricably woven into the economic relationships that existed between the same individuals in their private capacities. The Justice of the Peace was probably the landlord of the whole of the parish officers; the officers were the employers of the paupers; and even the clergyman, who was in many respects the most independent person in the village, often owed his position to the squire, let his glebe to the Churchwarden, bargained with the Overseer as to the rates on his tithes, and drew these tithes from every occupier of land in the parish.<sup>48</sup>

Before his posting to Germany, Ingrams had spent the whole of his working life overseas. His idyllic view of a 'golden age' of British parish democracy probably owed as much to what he had been taught at school or learned from his clergyman father,<sup>49</sup> as to any genuine understanding of past or contemporary British society.

Ingrams' imperialist outlook, 'missionary idealism' and nostalgic schoolbook view of 'pure' direct democracy in rural Britain, centred on the established church and unaffected by party politics, were inappropriate for the industrialised, largely urban society of Germany in the 1940s, in which those who claimed they had no interest in 'politics' were often former Nazis. As Raymond Ebsworth, a former colleague of Ingrams', explained later, to say you were non-political in post-war Germany generally meant that you were either a Nazi, but not willing to admit it, or that you had not had the courage of your convictions to declare membership of another party, such as the SPD or Communists, when these were banned by the Nazis.<sup>50</sup> Not surprisingly, Ingrams found it difficult to translate his aspirations into practical and workable policies.

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<sup>47</sup> Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), p17

<sup>48</sup> Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The Parish and the County* (London: Frank Cass, 1963), p48

<sup>49</sup> Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, pp16-17, claimed that the established clergy had a nostalgic view of the past, and regretted their reduced social and economic status after they lost some of their influence, at the start of the nineteenth century, in matters such as poor relief, education and the moral welfare of their parishioners.

<sup>50</sup> Raymond Ebsworth, *Restoring Democracy in Germany: The British Contribution* (London: Stevens & Sons Limited, 1960), pp22-23



### 4.3 First steps towards political renewal

*'Mil. Gov., in fact, should aim to be regarded as the midwife of German political thought rather than its repressor'*<sup>51</sup>

In June and July 1945, Montgomery and his senior officers took steps to initiate the process of political renewal in the British zone. The creation of a new Directive on Military Government, issued on 10 September, was discussed in chapter 2. The Directive covered broad principles only and the formulation of detailed policies was undertaken by the Control Commission divisions. Ingrams was responsible for its implementation in his area of responsibility; local government and administration. Because British policy was to build from the bottom up, his responsibilities included the renewal of political life generally, as well as the establishment of local and regional councils and preparations for elections.

The process was remarkably quick. General Philip Balfour, head of the Internal Affairs and Communication Division, wrote to his immediate subordinates on 2 August, a few days after receiving the first 'rough draft' directive, telling them that authority had already been given to implement those parts of the directive which related to freedom of assembly, liberty of discussion and the formation of political parties. A working party was to be established under the chairmanship of Ingrams to 'prepare clear and concise directions on the subjects considered.'<sup>52</sup> The first meeting of the newly constituted 'Working Party on Democratic Development' took place the following Monday, 6 August and met daily until its eighth and final meeting.<sup>53</sup> In addition to re-drafting the relevant sections of the Directive on Military Government, issued on 10 September,<sup>54</sup> the group prepared five Military Government Ordinances, numbers 8-12,<sup>55</sup> and a supplementary directive for local commanders on

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<sup>51</sup> Harold Ingrams, 'Building democracy in Germany', *The Quarterly Review*, No. 572, (April 1947), p213; FO 1050/423, 'Military Government Directive on Administrative, Local and Regional Government and the Public Services, Part I, Democratisation and Decentralisation of Local and Regional Government', p31. Also quoted in Ebsworth, *Restoring Democracy in Germany*, pp24-25

<sup>52</sup> FO 1050/806, memo from P. Balfour, Major-General, Chief I.A. & C. Division, 2 August 1945, on 'Draft Directive from Chief of Staff (BZ)'

<sup>53</sup> FO 1050/806

<sup>54</sup> FO 1050/1040, 'Directive on Military Government from Chief of Staff (British Zone)', 10 Sept. 1945, pp11-15

<sup>55</sup> IP 1/4. Ordinance no.8 regulated public discussions, forbade anything which brought the Military Government into disrepute or glorified war and prohibited 'Nazi or Militaristic activities'. Ordinance no.9 permitted non-political meetings such as theatrical events, concerts, circuses and carnivals. Ordinance no.10 concerned applications for permits for a political meeting, Ordinance no.11 applications for public processions and Ordinance no.12 regulated the formation of political parties.

'Administrative [sic], Local and Regional Government.'<sup>56</sup> Ingrams was the driving force in these meetings, preparing drafts of papers, ordinances, instructions and directives, which were generally accepted by the other participants, with only minor amendments.<sup>57</sup>

To assist the Working Party with their discussions, Ingrams circulated a thirteen page paper which outlined the background to their task and the reasons why he believed political reform was necessary.<sup>58</sup> He explained that the paper was concerned with 'the permanent decentralisation of administration in Germany', and their aim was 'to give the ordinary German man and women [sic] the maximum amount of say in the government of the country at all levels and to make it as difficult as possible for any one to establish the *Führer* principle again.'<sup>59</sup>

Ingrams argued that the ban on all forms of political activity, imposed at the start of the occupation, must be relaxed before they could change German political culture. Freedom of speech was to be permitted and 'indeed encouraged' as 'the German, who is entirely unused to such a luxury must gradually be brought to realise that it is not a luxury but a vital necessity which he or she must never surrender again.'<sup>60</sup> Every adult German man and woman would be given the right to vote and although, as in England, many would be apathetic, 'the Englishman would certainly resist if his right to vote was taken away from him and ideally the German must be taught to think likewise.'<sup>61</sup> The formation of political parties would be allowed, but in the Weimar Republic constituencies had been too large for voters to know the individuals they were voting for, and 'a vote should be cast for a candidate not a party.'<sup>62</sup> If ordinary men and women were given responsibility for government, this 'should also make it impossible for the Germans to say again with any shadow of truth "It wasn't our fault but our leaders."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> The full title was 'Military Government Directive on Administrative, Local and Regional Government and the Public Services. Part I: Democratisation and Decentralisation of Local and Regional Government,' published on 15 Sept. 1945. A printed copy is in FO 1050/423

<sup>57</sup> See for example FO 1050/806, memo from Ingrams, to Working Party members, 6 Aug.1945, on 'Mil Gov Instr No. 21 – Assemblies of Germans'

<sup>58</sup> FO 1050/806, Memo from W.H. Ingrams, 10 August 1945 and attached paper headed 'Working Party on Democratic Development: some considerations on points arising in connection with measures for development of democracy in the BZ.'

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p1

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p2

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p1

Most of the paper covered the detailed principles to be adopted for the establishment of indirect rule through local and regional Nominated Representative Councils.<sup>64</sup> Ingrams wrote with great confidence on the subject, based on his colonial training and experience. British policy in Germany, he wrote, was that of indirect rule, which he defined as 'rule through indigenous authorities' and 'one of the methods of teaching people to take responsibility in governing themselves.'<sup>65</sup> He provided detailed advice on how to establish nominated councils, their recommended size, functions and responsibilities, the role of the chairman and the creation of standing orders to govern procedure. British detachment commanders were advised to select members to ensure adequate representation of all the 'party or sectional' interests in an area. This was defined widely, including religious groups, trade unions, political parties, farmers and industrialists, or geographically by residential areas.<sup>66</sup>

The task he envisaged Military Government commanders performing in Germany was analogous to that undertaken by District Officers in a British colony or dependent territory. A few weeks earlier, on 17 July, he wrote to a former colleague in the Personnel Department of the Foreign and Colonial Office in London asking for his help with recruitment, saying he expected they would need around 600 officers before long, adding that 'it does seem to me that the jobs are very much what any D.O. [District Officer] or A.D.O. [Assistant District Officer] has to cope with especially in indirectly ruled territories....'<sup>67</sup> Revealing something of his personal circumstances, he added that those attracted to the job might include 'officers in the same position as myself, who have about 18 months leave due to them who would like to spend a year doing a useful job in a decent [i.e. temperate] climate.'<sup>68</sup>

The new directive on 'Administrative, Local and Regional Government' which resulted from the Working Party deliberations incorporated much material from Ingrams' paper. The directive was written in the form of a handbook for Military Government detachment commanders and provided guidance on actions to be taken within their own areas. An explanatory section started by discussing the 'Nature of the Problem – The Individual German':

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, pp2-13

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p2

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, pp3-13

<sup>67</sup> IP 2/1, letter from Ingrams to Seel, 17 July 1945.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

The German people have had National Socialism and Nazi doctrine pumped into them for many years. There are few ordinary Germans alive who are used to thinking for themselves.<sup>69</sup>

Until democratically elected Councils could be established, the directive continued, British Military Government had to function as a 'benevolent despotism' which should act impartially and ensure that the 'legitimate needs' of all sections of the population were met 'as far as is proper and reasonable.'<sup>70</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed at the end of the section on 'Political Parties', which contrasted a constructive and impartial Military Government with unscrupulous Nazi 'gangsters', and ended with an analogy which embodied the theme of a new birth for Germany, aided by the British:

Finally, it should be emphasised here as elsewhere that the aim of Mil. Gov. is constructive rather than repressive. Political parties should be the natural expression of political consciousness, in Germany as in England. The German should be made to feel that the regulations laid down in the Ordinance are designed to protect him against exploitation by unscrupulous careerists and gangsters ... Mil. Gov., in fact, should aim to be regarded as the midwife of German political thought rather than as its repressor.<sup>71</sup>

This passage in the directive echoed similar comments by Robertson, telling his staff in an article in the *British Zone Review* that their task in Germany was not just a matter of physical or economic reconstruction, but more like educating a child, as the German nation was 'being reborn in the present stage of its history.'<sup>72</sup> Despite the obvious paternalism and the persistence of negative stereotypes of Germans as ignorant and incapable of thinking for themselves, the wartime discourse of death and destruction was being superseded by a more positive one of new birth and renewal.

Ingrams was not successful in recruiting 600 former colonial officials to implement the directive but, by May 1946, Military Government officials had established Nominated Representative Councils in 7,738 of 7,969 *Gemeinde*, the lowest level of administration, and in 189 of 193 urban districts (*Stadtkreise*). The official in ALG branch who reported the figures commented:

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<sup>69</sup> FO 1050/423, Military Government Directive on Administrative, Local and Regional Government and the Public Services. Part I: Democratisation and Decentralisation of Local and Regional Government,' 15 Sept. 1945, p6

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p7

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p31

<sup>72</sup> 'Quo Vadis?' *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.3, 27 Oct. 1946, p1

On the whole it can definitely be said that the meaning of British democracy is beginning to penetrate the dormant, apathetic minds of the average German citizen.<sup>73</sup>

It may seem ironic that his comment, on the meaning of democracy, accompanied a progress report on the establishment of non-elected bodies, appointed by the British Military Government. It indicates that Ingrams and his colleagues did not consider true democracy to be unqualified rule by the people or their elected representatives; this was how Hitler had come to power. It was rather the responsible exercise of power, by independent, public-spirited individuals. How they were elected or appointed was the means to the end, not the end in itself; what mattered was that the 'right' people ended up in charge.

#### **4.4 Electoral Reform: the attempt to impose the British 'majority' system**

*'The chief argument against proportional representation is that it does not lead to a democratic way of life'*<sup>74</sup>

Whereas the establishment of Nominated Representative Councils proceeded smoothly, without the British feeling the need to consult the Germans on the issue, Ingrams and his colleagues in ALG branch encountered opposition among both British and Germans to their proposed changes to the German voting system. The most contentious issue, at this stage, was their proposal to replace the German system of proportional representation (in which the electorate voted for a party and candidates were selected from a party list in proportion to the number of votes each party received), with the British 'first past the post' or 'single majority' system, in which the electorate voted for a person, not a party, and the single individual who received the most votes was elected in each constituency.

Ingrams started work on arranging elections in November 1945, when he was asked to convene a 'British Working Party to supervise a German Working Party on Electoral Procedure'.<sup>75</sup> At the first meeting of the (British) Working Party on 20 November, he reported that decisions on the key policy issues, such as the dates of elections and methods of voting, had already been taken, but they wished to consult the Germans on matters of detail, such

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<sup>73</sup> IP 2/1, memo from TND/FG on 'Progress of Nominated Representative Councils', 9 May 1946

<sup>74</sup> IP 3/5, 'Papers of the Second Meeting of the German Working Party', 31 Jan. - 2 Feb. 1946.

<sup>75</sup> IP 1/7, minutes of the first meeting of the working party on electoral procedure

as the size of constituencies, qualifications for inclusion in the electoral roll and the design of the ballot boxes.<sup>76</sup> However, he found it was no longer possible to restrict discussions with the Germans to matters of detail or impose changes without consultation, as he had done in his earlier directive on local government, issued in September 1945.

Ingrams introduced the second meeting of the German Working Party, at the end of January 1946, by making a speech on the benefits of the single majority system. He argued that the British system worked well in the Empire, and should therefore also work in Germany:

Although we still think the single majority system is the best, we would like to consult with you again. We do not say the British democracy is the only kind in the world, or the best, but we do feel it has proved itself as the most workable. Perhaps because of the character of the British people, which is well known. This system has been adopted in other countries and in the Empire, and has worked there quite satisfactorily. We feel the German people are not dissimilar to the British, and there is no reason why it should not work here.<sup>77</sup>

He continued by describing the benefits of the British system in similar fashion to his earlier lectures to Control Commission staff: proportional representation did not lead to a 'democratic way of life', it was impersonal and led to 'one strong man with a weak following', the individual was especially important in local government which was the concern of everyone. He illustrated this last point with the example: "Are the streets muddy? We would like to know why." Parties must interest themselves in this sort of thing.' Some of the German delegates were either persuaded by Ingrams' arguments, or believed that the British system would work to their benefit. At the end of the meeting, the delegates voted – eight in favour of the British majority system and seven for proportional representation – but, unfortunately for Ingrams, this was not the end of the matter.<sup>78</sup>

It emerged during the meeting that Ingrams had received specific instructions, on a visit to London a few days earlier, that if the German delegates rejected the British single majority system, he should offer them the alternative vote instead.<sup>79</sup> This was a more proportional system, but preserved the principle of electors voting for an individual, not a party. His instructions probably derived from John Hynd, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> IP 3/5, 'Papers of the Second Meeting of the German Working Party', 31 Jan.-2 Feb. 1946

<sup>78</sup> Ibid

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

government minister responsible for Germany.<sup>80</sup> As a former railway official, Hynd was familiar with the alternative vote from its use by the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) in their internal elections. He was also sympathetic to the SPD who depended on a strong party organisation and therefore had most to gain from proportional representation, though all the representatives of political parties on Ingrams' Working Party opposed the British 'simple majority' system.<sup>81</sup> Kenneth Macassey, a Home Office expert delegated to advise Ingrams on matters of electoral procedure, told him a few days after the meeting that he had spoken with Hynd, who considered that Ingrams was 'trying to put a quick one over on the German political parties', and Hynd wanted to introduce the NUR system, despite Macassey telling him 'that the Germans weren't capable of working it...'<sup>82</sup>

The issue was resolved when Austen Albu arrived in Germany in early February, to take up a position in the Political Division of the Control Commission.<sup>83</sup> Albu was an active socialist, personally appointed by Hynd. Robertson raised the question of electoral procedure at his first meeting with Albu, telling him that he had decided to go ahead with the simple majority system rather than proportional representation and, if Hynd wished to change this, he should say so sooner rather than later.<sup>84</sup> At a divisional meeting a few days later, chaired by General Balfour and attended by Ingrams, Albu put forward Hynd's objections to Ingrams' proposed reforms. Albu told the meeting that Hynd was 'averse to imposing on the Germans a system of which they were not wholly in favour'; the fact that it worked in Britain did not necessarily mean it would work in Germany; proportional representation was 'well established in Europe ... had considerable support in England' and 'could not be lightly dismissed'. After a long discussion it was agreed that the best solution would be a compromise: proportional representation but without the party list. It was agreed that Albu and Ingrams should write a brief for Robertson, who was due to speak to the German Working Party at its next meeting on 14 February.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> FO 1049/2114, 'Confidential Report on Chancellor on the Duchy of Lancaster's Tour', 25 Jan. 1946, sent to Strang by Noel Annan (Lieutenant-Colonel, Political Division). The report noted under the heading 'electoral procedure' that Hynd considered that 'the views of the German Working Committee on this subject should prevail'.

<sup>81</sup> FO 1056/27, 'Minutes of the first weekly meeting between Political Division and A. & L.G. Branch' held on 6 Feb. 1946.

<sup>82</sup> IP 4/1, 'Note of conversation with Macassey', 6 Feb. 1946

<sup>83</sup> See chapter 5

<sup>84</sup> AP 13/2, diary entry for 3 Feb. 1946

<sup>85</sup> AP 13/2, diary entry for 4 Feb. 1946; FO 1056/27, 'Minutes of the first weekly meeting between Political Division and A. & L.G. Branch' held on 6 Feb. 1946

The brief still outlined the advantages of the British majority system, but represented a change in tone from Ingrams' earlier assertions that the British system was the best in the world and there was no reason why it should not be adopted in Germany.<sup>86</sup> In his address, Robertson was conciliatory. He re-emphasised that the Working Party should 'choose a system under which the voter declares himself for an individual and not merely a party' and that the existing electoral system in Germany was unsound and had contributed to the downfall of democracy in the Weimar Republic. However he concluded, somewhat ambiguously, by saying that:

What is good for England is not necessarily good for Germany. That is why we will not impose our system on you unless we are convinced that it will give general satisfaction to your people.<sup>87</sup>

The process of democratisation had now become a dialogue, not the forced imposition of one particular system by the British on the Germans.

The Working Party again failed to reach a conclusion. At a meeting in London attended by Hynd, Robertson, Albu, and Ingrams, a compromise was agreed which combined the form of the British system – electors voting for an individual in their constituency – with the substance of the former German proportional representation system.<sup>88</sup> Results of individual ballots were supplemented by the selection of additional candidates from a party list, to increase the total elected to reflect the proportion of votes cast for each party.<sup>89</sup> Albu later claimed that the compromise system was his idea, writing that, when studying the papers for the meeting, he 'suddenly remembered' Jim Middleton, secretary of the Labour Party, telling him about a similar system in France.<sup>90</sup> This system, with some modifications, is used in Germany today. Very similar systems have been adopted in Britain, in more recent times, for elections to the Scottish, Welsh and London Assemblies.

The issue of electoral procedure illustrates some of the tensions within the British administration and the limited scope Ingrams possessed to impose fundamental structural

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<sup>86</sup> IP 3/7, papers for 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of working party for electoral procedure

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> CAC, AP15, Austen Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, unpublished autobiography, pIII/6-7; FO 371/55611, C2327 'German Local Elections in the British Zone', notes of meeting held on 16 Feb. 1946

<sup>89</sup> Ingrams, 'Building democracy in Germany', pp217-8; Ebsworth, *Restoring Democracy in Germany*, p65

<sup>90</sup> CAC, AP15, Austen Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, unpublished autobiography, pIII/6; See also FO 371/55611 'German Local Elections in the British Zone'. A minute in the file by an FO official tends to confirm Albu's claim that that the new system was his idea.



changes on the German political system, despite having the support of Robertson, the Deputy Military Governor. Hynd could not dictate policy from London but, through Albu acting as the minister's representative on the ground, on this occasion he and Albu were able to argue the case and over-ride Ingrams, the British official in Germany responsible for the issue. Robertson changed his mind and, rather than supporting Ingrams, deferred to his political masters. The outcome was a compromise: the introduction of a new hybrid electoral procedure, which has stood the test of time remarkably well.

#### 4.5 Civil service reform: the proposed abolition of the *Bürgermeister*

*'No aspect of the work of ALG branch has been more discussed  
and disputed than this.'*<sup>91</sup>

A second, more contentious, dispute with leading German politicians arose over Ingrams' proposed separation of powers between an elected and unpaid 'Chairman of the Council' and a salaried professional 'Town Clerk', following the British model of local government in city, county, town and district councils. Previously in Germany, both roles had been combined in the position of *Bürgermeister*, an elected mayor with executive responsibilities. The measure was part of a package of reforms designed to establish the principle that senior paid civil servants (known as *Beamten*) should be 'servants of the people', not of the state, and limit their ability to engage in political activities, such as active membership of a political party.<sup>92</sup> The proposed reforms were strongly criticised by German officials and politicians, who saw them as an attempt to impose an alien system that conflicted with long-established and effective German administrative traditions.<sup>93</sup>

Opposition to the reforms generally, and to the proposed change in status of the *Bürgermeister* in particular, first emerged at a consultative body, comprising the German leaders of the regional governments in the British Zone.<sup>94</sup> Michael Thomas, a half-Jewish German refugee who fled Germany in 1939 and returned in 1945 as an officer in the British

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<sup>91</sup> IP 5/6, 'Principles on which political restrictions on public servants are based', 9 July 1946.

<sup>92</sup> Reusch, *Deutsches Berufsbeamtentum*, pp197-239

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, pp252-3

<sup>94</sup> Until regional elections were held in the British Zone, in October 1946, the heads of German regional governments and members of the consultative group were all British nominees.

army, acted as the British liaison officer for early meetings of the group.<sup>95</sup> He reported in October 1945 that:

The main objection the Germans raise against our directive is the transfer of the executive functions of the political head of an administration to a paid public servant. They argue that such a system might work well in England, but in present day Germany there would not be anybody who could afford to hold the political office without pay. To pay him although he has no executive functions would defeat the object of the scheme, quite apart from the financial burden to the administration.<sup>96</sup>

The next meeting of the group was attended by General TEMPLER,<sup>97</sup> who defended the reforms in a speech based largely on a brief prepared by J.M. Cobban, a close colleague of Ingrams, using the usual arguments that:

We have no intention of imposing a purely British conception of democracy on Germany. As a matter of fact, the Military Government Directive on Local Government is not a purely British thing, but is common form throughout the whole democratic world. It is no use saying the Germany already had an excellent democratic system in the past. That system was not good enough to prevent the seizure of power by anti-democratic forces ....<sup>98</sup>

The German politicians were not impressed. Thomas reported that:

Feeling is very strong on this subject. During the conference I was approached again and again about it. British writers were quoted as considering the German local government code preferable to the English system in many ways.<sup>99</sup>

Thomas did not elaborate further on which British writers they were referring to but, according to Reusch, the German Civil Service was regarded favourably in British and US local government studies written before 1945, admired for its independence, professionalism and lack of corruption.<sup>100</sup> Harold Laski, writing in 1917, contrasted the German tradition of self-government favourably with 'an over-centralized unitary sovereign state' in Britain, claiming that 'there was in normal times a far more vigorous and autonomous culture of local

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<sup>95</sup> Michael Thomas, *Deutschland, England über alles: Rückkehr als Besatzungsoffizier* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1984)

<sup>96</sup> FO 1050/149, 'Comments on Conference of Oberpräsidenten etc in Hamburg on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct 45: By Capt M.A. Thomas.'

<sup>97</sup> Deputy Chief of Staff to Robertson and previously Director of Civil Affairs for the British 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group

<sup>98</sup> FO 1050/149, 'Address to the Oberpräsidenten Landes [sic] - and Ministerpräsidenten by the D.C.O.S. (Exec.) at Detmold on 19 Nov. 45.'

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 'Notes on the conference of the heads of the Lander and Provinces of the British Zone held at Detmold, November 19/20, By Capt M.A. Thomas.'

<sup>100</sup> Reusch, *Deutsches Berufsbeamtentum*, p88, citing, inter alia, William Harbutt Dawson. *Municipal Life and government in Germany*, (London: 1914) pviii, pxi, pp113-115

and civic self-government in Germany than in Britain, where local authorities were merely an “anaemic reflex of the central power.”<sup>101</sup>

The issue of civil service reform illustrated some of the difficulties Ingrams and his colleagues faced when they attempted to apply the principle of a politically neutral civil service to Germany. Despite its reputation for independence and integrity, the great majority of German professional administrators still in post at the end of the war, if not themselves party members, had survived the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 and had supported the government throughout the war. Those who had been members of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), on the other hand, had been banned by the Nazis, some had been forced into exile or imprisoned and only a few older members possessed any practical experience of administration. In 1946, many of the SPD's leading figures had been appointed to positions of responsibility by the British and were financially dependent on salaries from executive positions in local or regional government.<sup>102</sup> Their ideal solution would have been to keep the system unchanged but to replace the former administrators, tainted with Nazism, with their own supporters. The British, on the other hand, were reluctant to endorse what appeared to them to be blatant partisanship, and wary of replacing proven administrators with others who had little or no experience.<sup>103</sup>

Ingrams' proposals were condemned by German politicians on both sides of the political spectrum. SPD members, in exile in London or recently returned to Germany, wrote to Hynd complaining about the proposals.<sup>104</sup> Thomas reported that Robert Lehr, a Christian Democrat and former *Bürgermeister* of Düsseldorf,<sup>105</sup> said that ‘he would resign altogether if the question which of the two jobs he would choose was put to him’.<sup>106</sup> It was not only German politicians who disagreed with Ingrams' reforms. Wolfgang Friedmann, a legal expert who fled from Nazi Germany in 1934 and worked for the British Control Commission

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<sup>101</sup> Harold Laski, *Studies in the Problem of Sovereignty* (New Haven, Conn. 1917), cited in Jose Harris, ‘From Richard Hooker to Harold Laski: Changing Perceptions of Civil Society in British Political Thought, Late Sixteenth to Early Twentieth Centuries,’ in Jose Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History*, p35.

<sup>102</sup> FO 938/248, letter from Sander to Hynd, 28 Feb. 1946

<sup>103</sup> FO 1050/130;

<sup>104</sup> Ludwig Eiber, *Die Sozialdemokratie in der Emigration* (Bonn: JHW Dietz Nachfolger, 1998), p468; Reusch, *Deutsches Berufsbeamtentum*, pp261-2

<sup>105</sup> Lehr, a founder member of the post-war German CDU, was later appointed Minister of the Interior in Adenauer's first Federal German government.

<sup>106</sup> FO 1050/149, ‘Notes on conference of the heads of the Länder and provinces of the British Zone held at Dusseldorf December 10, 11 and 12<sup>th</sup>, By Capt. M.A. Thomas.’ Revealing his attitude towards leading German politicians, Ingrams wrote in the margin of the notes ‘a good job if he does’.

after the war,<sup>107</sup> was highly critical of the British attempt to reform local government. Referring specifically to the proposal to abolish the position of *Bürgermeister*, he wrote that:

By this administrative reform the British Control Commission created a vital divergence between local government in its own zone and that of the other three zones. From the beginning it aroused violent opposition amongst the vast majority of German parties and organisations. Opposition was directed mainly against the alien character of the reform, the duplication of the apparatus and the increase in cost.<sup>108</sup>

Friedmann was not impressed by the colonial mentality of some of his British colleagues and he may have had Ingrams in mind when he wrote that:

Another type of British administrator suffers from the colonial mind. Many came to Germany with the idea that Germany could be administered on the pattern of an undeveloped British Colony. The British experience of colonial government may be more of a handicap than a benefit in the administration of a highly developed and civilised country.<sup>109</sup>

Faced with determined German opposition, Ingrams did not succeed in his proposal to abolish the position of *Bürgermeister* and enforce a separation of function between an elected 'Chairman of the Council' and paid 'Town Clerk'. He left Germany in August 1946, after completing a year's secondment from the Colonial Office, disappointed at what he considered to be lack of support from the government in London and a refusal by the Treasury to increase his pay following his promotion the previous December to head of branch.<sup>110</sup> In November 1946, Military Government Ordinance no. 57 transferred responsibility for local government and elections from the British to the German authorities.<sup>111</sup> Ingrams' plans for far-reaching reforms to the German Civil Service were shelved and apparently forgotten.<sup>112</sup> Rather than attempting structural changes to the German system, his colleagues in the Administration and Local Government Branch adopted an advisory role, running training courses and setting up a local government school of administration where invited British lecturers and German participants exchanged views and

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<sup>107</sup> Friedmann was later appointed Professor of International Law at Columbia University.

<sup>108</sup> W. Friedmann, *The Allied Military Government of Germany*, (London: Stevens & Sons Limited, 1947), p103

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, p46

<sup>110</sup> IP 6/5, confidential Memo on 'The anomalous position of the Branch', 20 July 1946

<sup>111</sup> Ebsworth, *Restoring Democracy in Germany*, p128

<sup>112</sup> For a full discussion of Ingrams' plans to reform the German Civil Service at all levels, see Reusch, *Deutsches Berufsbeamtentum*

debated best practice.<sup>113</sup> Most of the British local government reforms implemented previously were rolled back in later years.

Shortly before he left Germany, in July 1946, Ingrams complained in a personal memo, apparently written to his immediate superior, about the lack of support he received from his British colleagues. He wrote that he retained his sense of mission as 'one that needs to be carried through in the interests of humanity and our nation', but was increasingly discouraged by difficulties placed in his way internally by the British Control Commission. He was disappointed at the failure to authorise increases in staff, to advance the status of his branch to that of a division and at the lack of support from the government in London. He no longer wished to remain in Germany and had asked the Colonial Office to find him another post, adding 'They know well that my main experience and interests lie in the Middle East.'<sup>114</sup> Soon after, he left Germany for a period of leave in England, before being offered a post, not in the Middle East, but in Africa. In an article in the April 1947 issue of the *Quarterly Review*, however, summarising his work and achievements in Germany, he concluded more positively that: 'contact and cooperation' with the Germans were 'necessary to bring the task to a successful conclusion'.<sup>115</sup>

#### 4.6 Conclusion

The limited nature of Ingrams' electoral and administrative reforms was in stark contrast to the scale of his ambition to reform Weimar democracy. Even so, he met significant resistance and the British authorities were unwilling to impose fundamental structural reforms without the support of a clear majority of leading German politicians.

Ingrams' arguments in favour of specific reforms, including the replacement of proportional representation with the British 'first past the post' electoral system and the abolition of the position of *Bürgermeister*, were not compelling. Germans were not convinced that because something worked in Britain it would work in Germany, or that because it had been successfully introduced in the British Empire, it could and should be applied to Germany.

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<sup>113</sup> Ebsworth, *Restoring Democracy in Germany*, pp100-105

<sup>114</sup> IP 6/5, Confidential Memo on 'The anomalous position of the Branch', 20 July 1946

<sup>115</sup> Ingrams, 'Building democracy in Germany', p222

They dismissed or ignored his nostalgic view of British 'parish pump' democracy, centred round the church, and his belief in the ability of 'men of goodwill' to meet together and resolve their problems, without resorting to mass organisation and political parties. After twelve years of Nazi rule, when 'men of goodwill' had failed to prevent a disastrous war and previously unimaginable atrocities, it is not surprising that his views appeared both outdated and inappropriate. He and his colleagues did not appreciate the strengths of the pre-1933 German local government system, such as its respect for local traditions and high standards of professionalism, as well as the weaknesses. On a more practical level, it seemed perverse that the proposed reforms should disadvantage a political party, the SPD, that had been the most determined of all German parties in its opposition to the Nazis and which was heavily dependent on mass organisation, voting by party lists, and providing financial security for its leading members through salaried posts in public service.

Despite disagreement over the means, there was substantial agreement between the British reformers and the German politicians and administrators they worked with about the ends to be achieved, and what both considered to be democratic values. German politicians agreed that the electoral system should promote stable government with an effective but loyal opposition and that it should discourage extreme or 'freak' parties, as Ingrams called them.<sup>116</sup> They agreed on the need to protect individual rights and safeguard the individual against excessive demands from an authoritarian government.<sup>117</sup> They were sympathetic to the principles of decentralisation and the development of local responsibility. Those attending British-run local government schools pointed out inconsistencies between the principles they were taught and increased centralisation in Britain, such as the nationalisation of locally managed hospitals within the newly created NHS. As Ebsworth later related, such inconsistencies 'genuinely shocked the German audience.'<sup>118</sup>

Ingrams, like many of his contemporaries, displayed an arrogant belief in the superiority of the British character and way of life due, in his view, to nurture rather than nature and the favourable physical environment of 'Island Britain', contrasted with 'the plains of

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<sup>116</sup> IP 3/5, 'Papers of the second meeting of the German Working Party', 31 Jan. – 2 Feb. 1946; IP 2/1, letter to Philip Balfour, 20 Sept. 1945 on 'Developments in Hamburg'

<sup>117</sup> IP 2/2 'Introduction by Germany [sic] Working Party on Electoral Procedure' in notes of the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the German Working Party on Electoral Procedure, 10-12 Jan. 1946.

<sup>118</sup> Ebsworth, *Restoring Democracy in Germany*, pp113-4

Germany.<sup>119</sup> But he did not have sufficient authority within the British administration to impose his views. When he encountered opposition among German politicians, the British authorities backed down, arguing, as Hynd did in July 1946, that it 'would be wrong to impose a British system arbitrarily on the Germans.'<sup>120</sup> Ingrams treated Germans as ignorant natives, doubting their ability to 'think for themselves' or understand complex issues such as proportional systems of voting in democratic elections. At the same time he possessed a sincere belief that his actions were in the Germans' best interests. The British, he wrote, had 'a great record in helping other nations and races along the path to true democracy' and the best British administrators were 'guided by the three principles of honesty of purpose, just dealing and humanity'.<sup>121</sup> Such views could appear plausible in the 1940s, before decolonisation resulted, in many newly independent countries, in bitter conflict and government by dictatorship, rather than liberal democracy.

Historians have generally considered the early British attempts to introduce democracy in post-war Germany to be a failure.<sup>122</sup> Some of the features which Ingrams considered to be fundamental to the British democratic 'way of life', such as the need to vote for an individual rather than a party and the strict separation between an elected and unpaid 'Leader of the Council' and a professional salaried 'Town Clerk', no longer apply in Britain, let alone in Germany. Local government has lost much of its power to act independently of central government, in areas such as health, education and housing. Elected mayors in London and other cities now combine an elected role with paid executive responsibilities, (as has long been the case in the US), and the increasing use of special advisers appointed directly by government ministers has started to erode the long-standing British principle of an independent, non-political, civil service.

Many of Ingrams' proposals, such as changes to electoral procedure and the abolition of the position of *Bürgermeister*, were heavily criticised by contemporaries and never fully implemented, but this does not imply that his attempt to reform local government in Germany should be ignored. Perhaps the most important contribution of the British during the

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<sup>119</sup> IP 2/1, 'On Promoting Democracy in Germany'

<sup>120</sup> IP 5/6

<sup>121</sup> IP 6/5, 'Memorandum on Relations with Germans', 29 Sept. 1945

<sup>122</sup> E.g. Reusch, *Deutsches Berufsbeamtentum*, p376. Rudzio was more generous writing in 1968 in *Die Neuordnung des Kommunalwesens*, p215, that the British left a democratising and decentralising influence on West German local government, which became more prominent in the 1950s and 1960s, after the older officials retired.

occupation, in this as in other fields, was not that they succeeded or failed in imposing their particular conception of democracy, but that they proposed an alternative model for the future that was different from both the former Nazi and Weimar models. They argued and debated with leading German politicians what kind of system was most appropriate, initially at local and regional level and then for the Federal Republic, and in so doing discovered shared values as well as differences. When viewed in this way, the occupation was not a time of 'forced re-orientation' dictated by the Allies, as proposed by some historians,<sup>123</sup> but a period of dialogue and debate and the start of a successful and productive learning process, which as Ulrich Herbert and others have shown,<sup>124</sup> continued through the following decades with the liberalisation of West German society in the 1960s and the fall of communism in the East in the 1980s and 1990s, to the present.

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<sup>123</sup> E.g. Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)

<sup>124</sup> Ulrich Herbert (ed.), *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland: Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945-1980* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002)



## 5 Austen Albu and Allan Flanders: International socialist visions of political renewal: February 1946 - December 1947

*'The Berlin battle must be won –  
and unfortunately I am the only person here who might do it.'*<sup>1</sup>

*'We may all agree that the hope of realising the Just State in our time is a receding dream.  
Its achievement will be the responsibility of those who follow us.  
But we can try and help to smooth the path.'*<sup>2</sup>

Austen Albu and Allan Flanders were appointed to positions in the Political Division of the Control Commission by John Hynd, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and minister responsible for Germany.<sup>3</sup> All three had been active in socialist organisations before and during the war, in the Fabian Society, the Labour Party, and various fringe groups that attempted to influence Labour Party policy.<sup>4</sup> They were also closely associated with German socialist refugees who fled to Britain from Nazi Germany. According to a former official at his department, Hynd owed his appointment to his contacts with German exiles.<sup>5</sup> Albu had close links with a small but influential socialist splinter group, *Neu Beginnen*, and Flanders was the leading member of the Socialist Vanguard Group, the British arm of a group founded in Germany with international pretensions, the *Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund*, translated into English as Militant Socialist International, but usually referred to by its initials, ISK.

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<sup>1</sup> Churchill College Archives (henceforward CAC), Albu papers (henceforward AP) 12/3, Germany, correspondence 1946, letter from Austen Albu to his wife, Rose, 16 Feb. 1946

<sup>2</sup> Modern Records Centre, Warwick University (henceforward MRC), Socialist Vanguard Group papers (henceforward SVG), MSS.173/3/4, Minutes Agendas of Exec: 1943-48, personal message to members of the Socialist Vanguard Group

<sup>3</sup> For Albu's appointment by Hynd see Austen Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, unpublished autobiography, in CAC, AP15, p11/33. For Flanders' appointment by Hynd see Mary Saran, *Never Give Up* (London: Oswald Wolff, 1976), p95 and MRC SVG MSS.173/3/4, report of SVG executive meeting on 18 Dec. 1945.

John Kelly, *Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions: Allan Flanders and the British Industrial Relations Reform*, (New York & Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p44 and Denis Healey, *The Time of my Life* (London: Michael Joseph, 1989), p88, appear to be incorrect in stating that Flanders was appointed by Ernest Bevin.

<sup>4</sup> Hynd and Flanders were both active in the Fabian Society in Sheffield during the war. Hynd was also associated with the Socialist Clarity Group, founded by Albu and Patrick Gordon-Walker after the Socialist League, led by Stafford Cripps, was disaffiliated from the Labour Party. See AP 7/2, letters from Hynd to Albu, 5 and 29 Jan. 1940.

<sup>5</sup> Reusch, *Deutsches Berufsbeamtentum* p101, p259. Hynd was a self-taught railway official who spoke several languages fluently, including German. He was elected MP for Sheffield Attercliffe in a by-election in 1944. Apart from his contacts with German exiles, he had no experience which would have made him a suitable candidate as Minister for Germany. For his contacts with German exiles see Churchill College Archives, Hynd papers, 3/4, 'Personal correspondence about Germany or with Germans 1944-70'; Ulrich Reusch, 'Das Porträt: John Burns Hynd (1902-1971)', *Geschichte im Westen*, Vol.1 No.1 (1986); Ludwig Eiber, *Die Sozialdemokratie in der Emigration* (Bonn: J H W Dietz Nachfolger, 1998), pXLV, pCXV, p655, p745, p840; Mark Minion, 'Left, Right or European? Labour and Europe in the 1940s: The case of the Socialist Vanguard Group' *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, Vol.7, No.2, July 2010, p246.

Albu and Flanders' socialist views and contacts with comrades from different national, social and cultural backgrounds gave them a different perspective from the high ranking soldiers and administrators considered previously. They wanted to change the world for the better, not preserve the established social order and their own privileged position within it. They had an international outlook and believed that inequalities in society, between rich and poor, capitalists and workers, the strong and the weak, were more important than national differences.<sup>6</sup>

There were not many active socialists in senior positions in the British Military Government and Control Commission for Germany, so Albu and Flanders were not typical of the British governing elite in occupied Germany, but their experience is interesting for two reasons: they were personal appointees of John Hynd, the government minister responsible for Germany, and they had strong links with German socialists. A discussion of the difficulties they encountered can help answer a question which has intrigued historians of the occupation: why did a Labour Government in Britain not implement a more overtly socialist policy in Germany?<sup>7</sup> German socialists, especially those in exile, expected to take power after the Nazi State had been defeated and believed that a Labour government in Britain would help them to achieve this.<sup>8</sup> Albu and Flanders tried to support their German socialist comrades but found they had limited scope to implement policies they considered necessary to achieve constructive change. They returned to Britain at the end of 1947 disappointed with their achievements and with a pessimistic outlook for the future.

This chapter examines, firstly, their personal backgrounds and experience, political activities before and during the war and the nature of their links with German socialists. It then discusses what they and the groups they were associated with aimed to achieve in post-war Germany. The outcome of their work is examined, with a view to assessing their contribution

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<sup>6</sup> For Albu's political views see, *inter alia*, Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*; and the Socialist Clarity Group's journal, *Labour Discussion Notes*, in CAC AP14. For Flanders' views see Kelly, *Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions*; Material collected by Mary Saran on Allan Flanders' life and work, in MRC FP, MSS.65/199; and editorials in the Socialist Vanguard group's journal, *Socialist Commentary*, such as 'Liberated Britain', Aug. 1945.

<sup>7</sup> For example Wolfgang Rudzio, 'Großbritannien als sozialistische Besatzungsmacht in Deutschland – Aspekte des deutsch-britischen Verhältnisses 1945-1948' in Lothar Kettenacker, Manfred Schlenke, Hellmut Seier, (eds.), *Studien zur Geschichte Englands und der deutsch-britischen Beziehungen: Festschrift für Paul Kluge* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1981), p341

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Rudzio cited a leading German socialist exile in London and *Neu Beginnen* member, Richard Löwenthal, writing in 1946 that the Labour victory in Britain in 1945 should be a model for the success of democratic socialism in Germany.

to the process of political renewal and the limitations on their scope for action as members of the occupation authority.

## 5.1 Personal background, political activities and links with German socialists

### Austen Albu and *Neu Beginnen*

*'From these highly intelligent people I not only learnt a great deal about the history and events leading to the Nazi victory but also acquired a tougher mode of thought in political matters.'*<sup>9</sup>



Austen Albu, by Bassano, 1950 © National Portrait Gallery

Austen Albu was appointed in February 1946 on a temporary contract as head of the 'German Political Department' in the Political Division of the Control Commission. Three months later he was promoted to the influential position of Deputy Chairman of the newly

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<sup>9</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, p11/11

formed 'Governmental Sub-Commission' and remained in post until he returned to Britain in November 1947.

He was born in 1903 into a moderately prosperous British Jewish family. His paternal grandfather immigrated to Britain from Berlin and his mother's family had lived in the West of England since the eighteenth century. He went to school at Tonbridge,<sup>10</sup> but was not very successful academically. After training as an engineer at the City and Guilds College,<sup>11</sup> he moved to Newcastle where he met his future wife and became a socialist, appalled at the living conditions in some of the Tyneside boroughs and 'dissatisfied with the hypocrisy of the middle-class ethos in which I had been brought up and with the military nationalism which had inevitably accompanied the [first world] war.'<sup>12</sup> After a brief flirtation with the theatre, he settled down, married and obtained a well-paid job as works manager for Aladdin Lamps, who were planning to build a factory in West London. He spent a year in the United States to learn the business, returned to London and opened the factory in 1931. He continued with his political activities, joining the Socialist League when it was formed in 1932. He was also active in the Fabian Society and in 1933 was elected chairman of his local constituency Labour Party in Uxbridge.<sup>13</sup>

Albu was close to a small but influential group of German socialist exiles, *Neu Beginnen*.<sup>14</sup> The group had been founded in Germany as an elite cadre of revolutionary socialists, the 'Org.' which recruited members from both the socialist SPD and communist KPD. Internal differences over the best strategy to pursue after Hitler's accession to power in 1933, when all socialist parties were banned, led to some members going into exile, whereas others decided to continue to oppose the Nazis from within Germany. At first they avoided detection, but in 1935-36 a resistance 'cell' was discovered by the Gestapo and its members

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<sup>10</sup> A leading English public school, also attended by Sholto Douglas

<sup>11</sup> Part of Imperial College of Science and Technology

<sup>12</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, p1/5

<sup>13</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*

<sup>14</sup> The name *Neu Beginnen* came from the title of a pamphlet written in 1933 by the group's leader, Walter Löwenheim, under the pseudonym 'Miles'. Some members were former communists who had joined the KP-O, (Communist Party-Opposition), a group formed in 1929 which opposed the subservience of the KPD (German Communist Party) to Moscow. On *Neu Beginnen* see Eiber, *Die Sozialdemokratie in der Emigration*; Francis L. Carsten, 'From Revolutionary Socialism to German History' in Peter Alter, *Out of the Third Reich: Refugee Historians in Post-War Britain* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 1998), pp25-40; Mario Keßler, *Kommunismuskritik im westlichen Nachkriegsdeutschland: Franz Borkenau, Richard Löwenthal, Ossip Flechtheim.* (Berlin: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2011), pp76-7; Harold Hurwitz, *Demokratie und Antikommunismus in Berlin nach 1945: Vol.4, Part 1, Die Anfänge des Widerstands* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1990), pp33-50; Richard Löwenthal, *Die Widerstandsgruppe Neu Beginnen*, (Berlin: Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, 2001); Werner Röder, *Die deutschen sozialistischen Exilgruppen in Großbritannien 1940-1945*, (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft GmbH, 1973)

tried and sentenced to prison for up to five years. In 1939 after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the group's 'foreign office' (*Auslandsbüro*) moved from Prague to London. Some members emigrated again to the United States after the fall of France, some stayed in Germany, and around twenty spent the war in Britain, where they formed a loose group of intellectuals, well connected with parts of British academia and the media.

Albu first met representatives of the group in London in the 1930s. He and his wife, Rose, visited *Neu Beginnen* members in Prague and later in Paris.<sup>15</sup> In 1935 they went to Berlin where Rose, apparently without the knowledge of her husband, met the lawyer acting for a member who had been captured and was on trial.<sup>16</sup> *Neu Beginnen* members stayed at Albu's house in London after arriving in Britain as refugees. The historian Francis Carsten, for example, related how he stayed with them after leaving Amsterdam in 1939, before being offered a fellowship at Wadham College, Oxford.<sup>17</sup>

Patrick Gordon-Walker, a friend of the Albus and a don at Oxford, had made contact with *Neu Beginnen* on his visits to Germany in the early 1930s.<sup>18</sup> In 1937, he and Albu founded a new organisation, the Socialist Clarity Group, with, as Albu wrote in his memoirs, 'two or three of our German and Austrian comrades'<sup>19</sup> now in exile in London. British members of the group included William Warbey, later a left-wing Labour MP, Michael Chance, an ethnologist who *inter alia* attempted to explain the rise of Nazism in terms of social pathology<sup>20</sup> and Jon Kimche, a journalist and co-author with his brother David of *Secret Roads*, a history of Jewish migration to Palestine.<sup>21</sup>

Both *Neu Beginnen* and the ISK faced persecution and operated underground in Germany after Hitler's seizure of power. The Socialist Clarity Group made plans to do the same if Hitler invaded Britain. As a Jew, Albu was at particular risk and concerned for his safety and

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<sup>15</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, p11/11

<sup>16</sup> Hurwitz, *Die Anfänge des Widerstands*, p52

<sup>17</sup> IWM Sound Archive, accession no. 4483, Francis Carsten.

<sup>18</sup> Eiber, *Die Sozialdemokratie in der Emigration*, pCLXII. Gordon-Walker was elected MP in 1945, appointed PPS to Herbert Morrison and a year later Foreign Office Minister for Commonwealth Affairs. During the war he worked for the BBC on propaganda broadcasts to Germany, assisted by German exiles and *Neu Beginnen* members. See Patrick Gordon-Walker, *Political Diaries 1932-1971* (London: The Historians' Press, 1991)

<sup>19</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, p11/11. Socialist Clarity Group papers, (in CAC AP 17/1, 17/2) refer to *Neu Beginnen* members attending meetings or writing for the journal, including Paul and Evelyn Anderson and Richard (Rix) Löwenthal.

<sup>20</sup> Robert G. W. Kirk, 'Between the Clinic and the Laboratory: Ethology and Pharmacology in the Work of Michael Robin Alexander Chance, c.1946-1964', *Medical History*, October 2009, pp513-536 [<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2766138/> accessed 1 Feb. 2012]

<sup>21</sup> Jon and David Kimche, *The Secret Roads: the "Illegal" Migration of a People 1938-1948* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954)

that of his family, which made his struggle against the Nazis personal as well as political.<sup>22</sup> During the war, he made tentative arrangements to leave for the United States if necessary and 'organise resistance from there.'<sup>23</sup> His wife and family had already moved to the US.<sup>24</sup> He referred to his feelings about going as a Jew to Germany immediately after the war only occasionally in his letters, diaries and subsequent memoirs.<sup>25</sup> In June 1946 he visited a distant relation of his in Berlin, Käthe Schmidt, born Albu. He wrote to his wife that her reaction on meeting him 'only increased my ambivalence towards this extraordinary nation. How these people are still alive & (nearly) sane is beyond me.'<sup>26</sup> In his memoirs, he added after describing meeting another relative: 'Only those who lived during those appalling years while the Nazis ruled Germany can appreciate my astonishment and emotion at first discovering these two relatives alive.'<sup>27</sup>

Albu wrote in his memoirs that his links with *Neu Beginnen* contributed to the development of his political thinking. His political education, which had started under the influence of Wells and Shaw, R.H. Tawney, the Clarion Dramatic Society and the Independent Labour Party, progressed through discussions with his friends in *Neu Beginnen* to a better appreciation of 'the brutality of fascism' and an interest in the psychology of human behaviour. It led him to adopt 'a more pragmatic and sceptical view of the possibilities of rapid political change', confirmed his 'dislike of Communist methods' and reinforced his belief that 'in Britain significant change would only be achieved by a reinvigorated Labour Party.'<sup>28</sup> His political development eventually resulted in a firm commitment to technocratic democratic socialism. As Labour MPs in the 1950s and 1960s, both Albu and Gordon-Walker were strong supporters of the revisionist, right-wing of the party.

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<sup>22</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, p11/24

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p1/15

<sup>25</sup> E.g. Ibid, p1V/21, Albu wrote that, although he was not a Zionist, 'Events of the previous five years had inevitably stirred up profound emotional feelings among British Jews such as myself, aware that only the Channel and the Royal Air Force had enabled us to escape the holocaust in which the vast majority of our fellow Jews on the Continent of Europe had been coldly and scientifically destroyed. For them a haven from persecution and from their memories was urgent and essential.'

<sup>26</sup> AP 12/3, letter to his wife, 9 June 1946

<sup>27</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, p111/8

<sup>28</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, p11/11

## Allan Flanders and the *Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund* (ISK)

*'After a fight against my love for my parents, especially my mother, my ideals in scientific research, and the fear of being stranded afterwards without trade or profession, I decided to give up any results my scholarships might bring and go to the Walkemühle...'*<sup>29</sup>



Allan Flanders, date unknown, probably 1940s<sup>30</sup>

Allan Flanders succeeded Albu as head of the 'German Political Department' in the Control Commission's Political Division, from May 1946 until the end of 1947. He had previously been shortlisted by Hynd for the more senior position of Regional Commissioner, but rejected by Attlee for not possessing the necessary experience.<sup>31</sup> Flanders had close links with the German socialist organisation, the *Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund*, (ISK) and was the leading figure in its British arm, the Socialist Vanguard Group.<sup>32</sup> The ISK was

<sup>29</sup> MRC MSS.173/17/4, Flanders' ISK membership application, 2 Aug. 1930

<sup>30</sup> Photograph from Saran, *Never Give Up*

<sup>31</sup> FO 371/55612, 'Appointment of Regional Commissioners'

<sup>32</sup> On the ISK and Socialist Vanguard Group see Kelly, *Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions*; Saran, *Never Give Up*; Geoff Spencer, *Beloved Alien: Walter Fliess 1901-1985* (Vancouver, British Columbia and Donhead St. Andrew, Wiltshire: Privately printed, 1985); Christian Bailey, 'The European Discourse in Germany, 1939-1950: Three Case Studies', *German History*, Vol.28, No.4, December 2010, pp453-478; Mark Minion, 'Left, Right or European? Labour and Europe in the 1940s: The case of the Socialist Vanguard Group', *European Review of History: Revue*

unusual among socialist groups in taking its ideology not from Marxist economics, but from the ethical principles of Kant, as interpreted by the founder of the group, Leonard Nelson, a professor of philosophy at Göttingen University. In keeping with Kant's 'categorical imperative', their brand of ethical socialism included a belief in the equal moral value of all men and women, the need for individuals to act not in their own selfish interest but in accordance with rationally derived universal principles, and opposition to exploitation of all kinds: of peasants by landowners, of workers by capitalists, of the poor by the rich, or more generally of the weak by the powerful. ISK members placed an exceptionally high value on independent thought, believing that all problems were capable of resolution by open and rational discussion among suitably qualified and trained individuals. They were opposed to all forms of dependency which limited the ability of people to think for themselves, including belief in any form of revealed religion. This extended to the dependence of children on their parents, which, they believed, had to be counteracted by educating children from an early age at an institution in which they would learn to think for themselves, in accordance with suitable ethical principles.<sup>33</sup>

The organisation was openly elitist and anti-democratic. They believed that social behaviour was governed by universal laws, in the same way as the physical universe was governed by the laws of mathematics. In their view, the best way for a group of people to make a decision that affected them all, was not to leave this to chance through the process of voting, but to entrust the decision to an elite leader or group of leaders, whose rigorous ethical training enabled them to act fairly and take the interests of all into account. The resulting tendency towards authoritarianism was tempered by a culture of open discussion, with the leaders consulting each other and encouraging constructive criticism.<sup>34</sup> The ISK was an unusual organisation that can perhaps be best understood as a combination of a well-run business, progressive educational institution and fundamentalist religious sect, together with the utopian (or dystopian) elitism of the rulers of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

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*européenne d'histoire*, Vol.7, No.2, July 2010, pp229-248; R.M. Douglas, 'No Friend of Democracy: The Socialist Vanguard Group 1941-50', *Contemporary British History*, Vol.16, No.4, pp51-86; Lawrence Black, 'Social Democracy as a Way of Life: Fellowship and the Socialist Union, 1951-59', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.10, No.4, 1999, pp499-539; Eiber, *Die Sozialdemokratie in der Emigration*; Röder, *Die deutschen sozialistischen Exilgruppen in Großbritannien*; Hellmut Becker, Willi Eichler, Gustav Heckmann (eds.), *Erziehung und Politik: Minna Specht zu ihrem 80. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Öffentliches Leben, 1960)

<sup>33</sup> Spencer, *Beloved Alien*, p18; Hanna Bertholet, 'Gedanken über die Walkemühle' in Becker, Eichler, Heckmann (eds.), *Erziehung und Politik*, pp269-286. Children at the organisation's school, the *Walkemühle* were not allowed to write to their parents and visits to the school by parents were restricted to one day a year.

<sup>34</sup> Douglas, 'No Friend of Democracy: The Socialist Vanguard Group 1941-50', pp53-55



Allan Flanders was recruited to the ISK in 1928, when he was 18 years old and still at school, after a chance meeting with an ISK member who was visiting Britain to recruit new members.<sup>35</sup> After its founder, Leonard Nelson, died in 1927, the ISK's political activities were led by his former assistant, Willi Eichler, while the educational side of the organisation was run by Minna Specht, who, with Nelson, had founded their educational establishment, the *Walkemühle* in 1924.<sup>36</sup> Flanders decided to leave Britain to attend a three year course at the *Walkemühle*, in preference to attending university and pursuing a career in scientific research. The school was small, taking no more than six students at one time on a three year course for young adults aged 17-20. In addition to academic study, the curriculum included practical subjects, such as woodwork and metalwork, and political education in the form of attending local Nazi rallies and speaking out in opposition.<sup>37</sup>

After a year at the school, Flanders formally applied to join the ISK. His application has survived in the archives and reveals the level of commitment the organisation expected of its members. In answer to the questions: 'why I wish to enter the ISK' and 'why I am a socialist', he wrote that:

I am convinced it is my duty to fight against the injustice that I know to exist in the world. I know I can only do this by supporting the political struggle and the establishment of a just state ... I have convinced myself that I am prepared and able to give up all claims on a private life and always follow the decisions of the ISK.<sup>38</sup>

He had to be sponsored by two members, declare that he was not a member of any religious organisation and certify not only that he was a vegetarian, but that he had visited a slaughterhouse and so understood, from his personal experience of the animals' interest in

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<sup>35</sup> Kelly, *Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions*, p7; MRC MSS.173/17/4, Flanders' ISK membership application, 2 Aug. 1930

<sup>36</sup> 'Lebensdaten Minna Spechts' in Becker, Eichler, Heckmann, (eds.), *Erziehung und Politik*, p402. The *Walkemühle* was one of a number of progressive boarding schools, known as *Landerziehungsheime*, created as part of a European movement for educational reform which aimed to educate the whole person, influenced by the ideas of Pestalozzi and Fröbel in Switzerland and Germany, and Thomas Arnold in Britain. Other writers (e.g. Douglas, 'No Friend of Democracy', p58), give slightly different dates for the foundation of the *Walkemühle*, but this source seems the most reliable, stating that work started in 1923 and the school opened in Easter 1924.

<sup>37</sup> Kelly, *Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions*, p16; Allan Flanders, 'Constant Adventure' and Hanna Bertholet, 'Gedanken über die Walkemühle' in Becker, Eichler, Heckmann (eds.), *Erziehung und Politik*, pp317-322, pp269-286. For a history of the school see Rudolf Gisselmann, *Geschichten von der Walkemühle* [<http://www.allerart.de/walkemuehle/index.shtml>] accessed 1 Feb. 2012]

<sup>38</sup> MRC MSS.173/17/4, Flanders' ISK membership application, 2 Aug. 1930

life in the face of death, that it was wrong for people to exploit animals for food, when they could survive perfectly well without doing so.<sup>39</sup>

Flanders returned to Britain in 1932, shortly before the *Walkemühle* was closed by the Nazis. Over the next ten years he worked as a door-to-door salesman and technical draughtsman in Sheffield and London, while living in communal houses with other members and helping to organise the tiny English branch of the ISK, which never comprised more than 26 members,<sup>40</sup> including three of his English comrades who had attended the *Walkemühle* and a few German ISK members who had escaped from Germany and obtained permits to enter Britain. Marriage and sexual relations were discouraged, as a distraction from their more important political work.<sup>41</sup> At first, the English group referred to themselves as a branch of 'Militant Socialist International' and sold copies of the (German) ISK journal translated into English. After the ISK was banned by the Nazis they published their own paper, *The Vanguard*, renamed *Socialist Vanguard* from 1936, re-launched in September 1940 as *Commentary*, and renamed from 1941 until it closed in 1979, *Socialist Commentary*.<sup>42</sup>

In 1943, the ISK leadership, then in exile in London, decided that the English branch should operate independently.<sup>43</sup> Though still affiliated to ISK, they adopted the name Socialist Vanguard Group. Ironically, given its origins, *Socialist Commentary* has been regarded by at least one historian as the 'house-journal of Labour Party revisionists'<sup>44</sup> and 'the right wing's answer to *Tribune*'<sup>45</sup> This is perhaps overstating the case, but it is remarkable that a group whose origins lay in German revolutionary socialism became part of the British Labour Party establishment, and the journal's editor from 1946 to 1979, Rita Hinden, was included with

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Kelly, *Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions*, p19

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p20, p23; Black, 'Social Democracy as a Way of Life', p528. Marriage for political reasons was accepted. In 1933 Flanders underwent a 'marriage of convenience' with a leading German ISK member, Mary Saran, so that she could enter Britain. Other German ISK members entered marriages of convenience in order to acquire British citizenship, including the leader of the London group in exile, Grete Herrmann, (Margaret Henry), a distinguished quantum physicist. See <http://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/0812/0812.3986.pdf> accessed 1 Feb. 2012

<sup>42</sup> Kelly, *Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions*, p20

<sup>43</sup> Eiber, *Die Sozialdemokratie in der Emigration*, pCXXIX, p776

<sup>44</sup> Minion, 'Left, Right or European?' p232; Douglas, 'No Friend of Democracy', p72; Black, 'Social Democracy as a Way of Life', p503. Mary Saran commented later that 'It often made me furious to see SC referred to as "right-wing"' (Saran, *Never Give Up*, p98).

<sup>45</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour People: Leaders and Lieutenants: Hardie to Kinnock* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p242

Keir Hardie and Neil Kinnock in Kenneth O. Morgan's pantheon of twenty-eight *Labour People*.<sup>46</sup>

After he left Germany at the end of 1947, Flanders spent a year in the United States, and then built a successful career in academia as one of the UK's most highly respected experts on industrial relations. He continued to act as chair of the editorial board of *Socialist Commentary* until he died in 1973, aged 63.<sup>47</sup>

Albu and Flanders had much in common and shared similar views. Flanders stayed with Albu in Berlin when he moved there in August 1945. Albu commented in a letter to his wife that 'Allan is staying with me & we get on quite well – he is not a bit narrow-minded!'<sup>48</sup> As Albu was the more senior and influential of the two and there is considerably more material relating to him in the archives, the following sections discuss his work to a greater extent than that of Flanders. The conclusions drawn from the material, however, relate to both as committed international socialists. Differences between them are discussed in the text.

## 5.2 Democratic socialist visions for post-war Germany

*'A federation of free, democratic Socialist states of Europe is the only peace settlement which can ensure that the tragic history of the last twenty years is never again repeated.'*<sup>49</sup>

### The Socialist Clarity Group

Shortly after the outbreak of war, Albu prepared a draft 'manifesto' for his comrades in the Socialist Clarity Group. His views reflected those of his German friends in *Neu Beginnen* and many others on the political left in Britain and Germany. They argued that the war had been caused by the 'ruling classes' of all countries. In Germany, the industrialists, the 'militarists' in the army and the landowning Prussian Junkers were to blame, not the workers who, they believed, opposed the war and would eventually understand that their true interests lay in supporting a socialist revolution. The logical consequence of these views was that an Allied

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, pp239-245

<sup>47</sup> Kelly, *Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions*, p57

<sup>48</sup> AP 12/3, letter to his wife, 14 Aug. 1946

<sup>49</sup> AP 7/1, 'Group Material' Aug. 1939 – Aug. 1941, 'AA manifesto'

victory would not in itself prevent a third world war, as competition among the ruling classes of different nationalities would continue unchecked. The only way to achieve a lasting peace was through the creation of a new socialist world order.<sup>50</sup>

Similar views continued to be expressed during the first three years of the war in the Socialist Clarity Group's journal *Labour Discussion Notes*. Albu and Gordon-Walker were two of the four members of the publications committee, so, although most articles were unsigned and cannot be directly attributed to any one individual, they can be taken as indicative of Albu's thinking at the time. In May 1941 the journal published an article 'prepared following discussions with German socialists' in response to Vansittart's *Black Record*.<sup>51</sup> Vansittart was a former Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office who gave a series of radio talks in December 1940, arguing that all Germans were aggressive, militaristic, and could not be trusted. Edited extracts were published in the *Sunday Times* and the full text printed as a pamphlet, *Black Record*, which sold half a million copies in the first year.<sup>52</sup>

To counter Vansittart's claim that all Germans were to blame for the war, not just the Nazis, the *Labour Discussion Notes* article argued that Germans were not inevitably aggressive as, for the greater part of its history, Germany had been 'the battleground for other nations' wars rather than themselves invaders.' The causes of the undoubted aggression of the previous 75 years, the article continued, lay not in the German character, but in the political and social structures of the German Reich created by Bismarck in 1871: the excessive power of the landowning Junkers, the army and the big industrialists, the 'failure of the German middle classes' and of social democracy in 1918-20, and divisions in the working class movement. The article concluded by claiming that the working class was the only democratic force left in Germany and a peaceful Europe could only be achieved by 'a thorough and completed democratic revolution in Germany.' After the end of the war and the defeat of the Nazis, the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Robert Vansittart, *Black Record* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1941)

<sup>52</sup> On Vansittart and 'Vansittartism' see Jörg Später, *Vansittart: britische Debatten über Deutsche und Nazis 1902-1945*, (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003); Isabelle Tombs, 'The victory of socialist "Vansittartism": Labour and the German question, 1941-1945', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.7, (1996), pp287-309

Allies should help and not hinder the German people in their destruction of the power of the ruling classes.<sup>53</sup>

From the end of 1942 there were no further articles on Germany in *Labour Discussion Notes*. Perhaps the Socialist Clarity Group felt constrained by the withdrawal of official support for SPD exiles by the Labour Party, following criticism in the press of German exiles living in Britain.<sup>54</sup> There is also evidence that the views of some *Neu Beginnen* members were starting to change, and they no longer believed as firmly as they once had in the opposition of the working class to Hitler and the prospects for a revolution in Germany. When German prisoners of war were captured in large numbers in North Africa and Europe from 1943, *Neu Beginnen* members and other German exiles were involved in their interrogation and subsequently with re-education activities in POW camps. They realised that the great majority of ordinary German soldiers still believed in the ultimate victory of Nazism and that, as long as Hitler remained in power, the prospects for effective opposition, let alone a revolution within Germany, were minimal.<sup>55</sup>

There is no evidence that Albu had any particular interest in post-war planning for Germany after the end of 1942. He was more concerned with Britain. He was interested in industrial psychology and production planning and control. He wrote a Fabian pamphlet on management and was active in the Society, joining the executive committee in 1943.<sup>56</sup> He tried to further his political ambitions through being adopted as a Labour Party prospective parliamentary candidate. He was shortlisted for two constituencies but not selected.<sup>57</sup> He wrote in his memoirs that, though excited by the Labour victory in 1945, he was disappointed to have played no part in it. He 'hoped and half expected' that the new Labour government would find some use for his services but, when Hynd telephoned him in early 1946 suggesting he should go to Germany, 'the idea of taking part in what seemed the impossible task of restoring democracy to Germany and deciding its future was not one I would have

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<sup>53</sup> CAC AP Box 14, 'Causes of German Aggression' in *Labour Discussion Notes*, 22 May 1941. A note stated that the article had been written following discussions with 'Paul Sering, a member of the Neubeginnen group.' 'Paul Sering' was a pseudonym used by Richard Löwenthal.

<sup>54</sup> Später, *Vansittart*, p355; Eiber, *Die Sozialdemokratie in der Emigration*, pLXI; Isabelle Tombs, 'The victory of socialist "Vansittartism"'

<sup>55</sup> Eiber, *Die Sozialdemokratie in der Emigration*, pCLXIV; Hurwitz, *Die Anfänge des Widerstands*, p60

<sup>56</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, pII/27, pII/29

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, pII/31; Jonathan Schneer, *Labour's Conscience: The Labour Left 1945-51* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), p166. Albu lost to Geoffrey Bing in Hornchurch and to Ian Mikardo in Reading.

chosen myself.' Nevertheless, he accepted the position on a temporary contract for three months, with no clear brief from Hynd as to what the job entailed.<sup>58</sup>

The contrast between his strong commitment to international socialism before the war, connections with *Neu Beginnen*, active political engagement with the Socialist Clarity Group and the Fabian Society, and his uncertainty about what to do in 1945 is striking. He wished to contribute to the post-war reconstruction of Britain, ideally as a Member of Parliament or through being offered a position by the Labour government, but was not given the opportunity to do so. He had strong socialist principles, but the international situation was very different in 1945 from the 1930s, and he was hesitant about accepting a position in Germany.

### **The ISK, the Socialist Vanguard Group and *Socialist Commentary***

The ISK had a different vision for the post-war future of Germany from *Neu Beginnen*. They were equally committed to the defeat of fascism, but did not share *Neu Beginnen's* belief in the opposition of the working class to Hitler, or the prospects for a socialist revolution. The ISK worked by trying to influence organisations from within. They possessed strong principles, which they defined as the achievement of the 'just state', but were prepared to compromise if necessary and act pragmatically in accordance with a principle they described as 'ethical realism'.<sup>59</sup>

The ethical principles Flanders learnt from the ISK and at the *Walkemühle* were an undoubted influence for the rest of his life. Mary Saran, who had known and worked with him since his time at the school, and after emigrating to Britain in 1933 lived with him and other ISK members in the 1930s and 1940s in a communal house in London,<sup>60</sup> wrote that 'The most important influence in shaping Allan's personality was ... the *Walkemühle*. This is true of the development of his ideas, his sense of public responsibility and his method of teaching.'<sup>61</sup> He was opposed to 'power politics' and the division of Europe into spheres of influence, calling for a socialist-led Britain to play a lead in a European federation.<sup>62</sup> Until

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<sup>58</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, p11/33

<sup>59</sup> Minion, 'Left, Right or European?', p231-2, p247; Black, 'Social Democracy as a Way of Life', p501

<sup>60</sup> Saran, *Never Give Up*, pp82-3

<sup>61</sup> MRC FP, MSS.65/199, material collected by Mary Saran on Allan Flanders's life and work. Typescript draft copy by Saran for an unpublished entry for the Dictionary of Labour Biography, headed 'Allan Flanders – Socialist, Industrial Relations Expert, Public Servant' with note in pencil 'Marked copy sent to John Saville, 23.11.75', p11

<sup>62</sup> Minion, 'Left, Right or European?', pp239-240

1945, however, he did not show any particular interest in post-war policy for Germany and does not appear to have been involved in discussions with the ISK leadership on the subject. He joined the local Sheffield Fabian Society and in 1942 became branch secretary.<sup>63</sup> In 1941 he wrote a pamphlet, *Wage Policy in Wartime*, which helped him succeed in his application as one of three Research Assistants at the TUC, from 310 applicants.<sup>64</sup> His biographer, John Kelly, argued that his thinking evolved over this period, 1941-45, towards abandoning revolutionary socialism in favour of the transformation of the economy through state planning. In keeping with his ISK principles, he considered that monopoly and vested interests were the problem, not private ownership of the means of production, and he came to see nationalisation as a means to achieve control of the economy, not as an end in itself.<sup>65</sup>

By the end of 1945, Flanders was uncertain whether to continue at the TUC, as he considered the job had 'lost most of its political importance', but he had no alternative position in mind.<sup>66</sup> The executive officials of the Socialist Vanguard Group discussed whether he should apply for the position of secretary of the Fabian Society, but were concerned that much of his time would be wasted in internal politics and agreed the position was not ideal.<sup>67</sup> A month later the executive met again to discuss his decision to accept a position in Germany. The minutes listed nine reasons for accepting, including the influence he could have on British policy, the influence on colleagues he would be working with, valuable new contacts, raising the status of the group through one of their members having such a responsible position and, from a personal point of view, the educational value of his working in a challenging position that would place high demands upon him.<sup>68</sup> There was no reference to any specific results they hoped he could achieve. Perhaps in such a tightly knit group, this was taken for granted and not considered worth recording. Rather than promoting specific policies, they aimed to further the influence of the group through their educational activities and the everyday life and work of their members.

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<sup>63</sup> Kelly, *Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions*, p57

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p54

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid* p57; Allan Flanders, 'Cartels – A Challenge', in *Socialist Commentary*, August 1945, pp145-9

<sup>66</sup> MRC SVG MSS.173/3/4, Minutes Agendas of Exec: 1943-48, Executive meeting Nov. 1945

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, Dec. 1945

### 5.3 Promoting political renewal and a positive socialist policy

*'The only real hope of a defence against authoritarianism whether of the extreme right or extreme left in Germany, as in the whole of Western Europe, lies in a policy of progressive social change.'*<sup>69</sup>

In early 1946, when they left Britain to take up their positions in Germany, Albu and Flanders could look back to at least fifteen years of their lives dominated by the struggle against fascism, together with the belief that once victory had been secured it would be possible to create a better socialist order that would make any future war impossible. However the actual situation appeared uncertain and precarious, despite the Labour Party election victory in 1945. They neither expected nor chose to go to Germany, but both accepted the opportunity to do so when asked by their former political colleague and ally, John Hynd. They were familiar with the country through their close links with German socialist exiles in London, but had no clear plan for what should be done, apart from a perceived need to follow a 'positive policy of social change'<sup>70</sup> which, so they believed, would encourage democratic forces in Germany, prevent the return of National Socialism and create better living conditions for the great majority of the population.

The appointment of Albu and Flanders by Hynd to influential positions in Germany, together with other evidence collected for this study, runs counter to the widely held view that German socialists in exile in London had very little influence on British policy.<sup>71</sup> This was undoubtedly true for the duration of the war and the three month period leading to the Potsdam Agreement in August 1945, but not subsequently.<sup>72</sup> The Labour Party, which had invited the SPD leadership in exile to move to London from Paris in 1940, after the defeat of France, ceased all official contacts and withdrew their political and financial support in 1942, in an acrimonious internal dispute within the Party which has been termed 'The victory of socialist

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<sup>69</sup> AP 28/3, memorandum, 14 March 1946

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> E.g. Charles Wheeler, Foreword to *Germany 1944: The British Soldier's Pocketbook* (Kew, Richmond, Surrey: The National Archives, 2006), pvi

<sup>72</sup> In the course of my research I have found many examples of German exiles working in various positions for Military Government or the Control Commission, and subsequently in influential positions in the Federal Republic of Germany. This study supports Reusch's claim, made in 1980 and still valid today, that the 'widespread view' that the British made little use of the knowledge of German émigrés needed to be 'heavily qualified'. Reusch wrote that, during his research on the organisational structure of the occupation, he found many examples of German exiles working during and after the war in Foreign Office research and intelligence departments, as legal advisors, in SHAEF, in the Control Commission press and other departments and in the Bizonal control office in Frankfurt. See Ulrich Reusch, 'Die Londoner Institutionen der britischen Deutschlandpolitik 1943-48. Eine behördengeschichtliche Untersuchung', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 100 (1980), p341.



Vansittartism',<sup>73</sup> referring to Labour Party members who supported views expressed by the former Foreign Office Permanent Under-Secretary, Robert Vansittart.<sup>74</sup> In late 1945 and 1946, however, the position was reversed and the new Labour government showed a cautious but clear preference for the socialist SPD over other parties in Germany. In addition to John Hynd's appointment as minister for Germany, two other Labour Party members who had supported the German SPD leadership in exile during the war and argued against the 'Vansittartists', Philip Noel-Baker and Patrick Gordon-Walker, were given junior positions in the government. The 'Fight for Freedom Publishing Company', the organisation which had championed the 'Vansittartist' position became defunct<sup>75</sup> and one of its leading supporters, William Gillies, was replaced as secretary of the Labour Party International Subcommittee by Denis Healey, who was more sympathetic to the German socialists.<sup>76</sup>

Albu and Flanders therefore had some grounds for optimism in early 1946 when they took up their positions as members of the British Military Government. They could hope for support for an active socialist policy in Germany from at least some members of the government in London.<sup>77</sup> Their friends among the German socialists in exile in London had overcome earlier divisions and by the end of 1945 had re-established contact with the re-formed SPD in Germany.<sup>78</sup> Unfortunately, these early hopes were not fulfilled. As discussed in the previous chapter, Albu and Hynd were able to secure modifications to Ingrams' proposals for reform in one area, electoral procedure, which they were concerned would disadvantage the SPD.<sup>79</sup> This section discusses Albu's and Flanders' relations with their British colleagues and the influence Albu exerted on British policy in two further areas, the campaign to prevent the 'Fusion' of the socialist SPD with the communist KPD, and the devolution of power from British Military Government to German regional and local authorities. It concludes by exploring the reasons for their growing disillusionment and pessimistic outlook for the future political development of Germany.

<sup>73</sup> Tombs, 'The victory of socialist "Vansittartism"'

<sup>74</sup> In a series of radio talks in December 1940, later published as a pamphlet, *Black Record*, Vansittart argued that all Germans were aggressive, militaristic and could not be trusted, making no exception for socialist or communist exiles in London or other German political opponents of Nazism. See above, p138

<sup>75</sup> Später, *Vansittart*, p396

<sup>76</sup> Healey, *The Time of my Life*, p74

<sup>77</sup> See for example Editorial, 'Liberated Britain' in *Socialist Commentary*, August 1945, pp142-5: 'A victory for the Left in one country is also a victory for the Left everywhere.'

<sup>78</sup> Eiber, *Die Sozialdemokratie in der Emigration*

<sup>79</sup> See above pp115-119

## Relations with colleagues

Hynd, Albu and Flanders came from different social backgrounds and possessed different political views from the military generals and Foreign Office diplomats, so it is not surprising that there were differences of opinion. Montgomery wrote on the cover of one document in his personal papers that Hynd was 'utterly useless'.<sup>80</sup> Albu did not think highly of Montgomery's political judgement either, referring to his February 1946 memorandum on their task in Germany as 'a policy statement of boy scout naivete'.<sup>81</sup>

The generals were not generally sympathetic towards a policy of supporting one political party over another. General Richards, the Commander of 8 Corps, responsible for the administration of Schleswig Holstein, wrote to Robertson in April 1946 complaining about what he considered to be political bias and interference in the work of his officers:

I think the trouble is this. The Political Division – and it is not for me to say whether they are right or wrong – appear determined to put SPD members wherever they can into positions of authority and to eject everything to the Right of this .... The means adopted to achieve this tend to be underhand and consist in proving that every Right-wing person is undesirable and unpleasant while everyone to the Left is excellent – a demonstrably idiotic assumption.<sup>82</sup>

Robertson's reply was sympathetic. He confirmed that the Labour government in London supported the SPD and wished to see them appointed to positions of authority in Germany, but suggested there was a 'conflict between this policy and that of placing in authority persons having the backing of the majority of the population'.<sup>83</sup> Albu, in turn, considered Richards' predecessor, Evelyn Barker, a 'bloody reactionary' who 'practically lived with the Bismarck family' and 'got on very well with the captured German generals.' He was appalled when Barker was sent to command British troops in Palestine.<sup>84</sup>

It would, however, be wrong to over-emphasise the differences. Flanders objected to 'the political outlook of many officers in Military Government (military and civilian)'<sup>85</sup> but claimed to have successfully influenced the views of his immediate superiors in Political Division,

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<sup>80</sup> IWM BLM 170

<sup>81</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, pIII/2

<sup>82</sup> FO 1030/307, letter from Richards to Robertson, 18 April 1946

<sup>83</sup> FO 1030/307, reply from Robertson to Richards, 25 April 1946

<sup>84</sup> AP 12/3, letter to his wife, 3 Aug. 1946

<sup>85</sup> 'The British Zone', *Socialist Commentary*, Nov. 1946

both of whom were traditionally minded Foreign Office diplomats.<sup>86</sup> Albu's personal diaries for his first four months in Germany, together with his letters to his wife over the same period, show that his attitude to his British colleagues was ambivalent. He had little time for Ingrams, whom he considered well-intentioned, but over-mechanical in his approach, inflexible in his ideas and 'such a waffler'.<sup>87</sup> He had more respect for the senior generals, some of whom appeared surprisingly receptive to his ideas. He wrote to his wife that:

Whatever we are doing to the Germans the job of political education we are doing on the British army & its brighter officers is terrific. They seem to like it. The sincerity & as Robertson says 'sense of mission' is first class.<sup>88</sup>

He told her that he had discussed the need for a 'positive socialist policy' with Generals Robertson, Templer and Balfour.<sup>89</sup> He attempted to explain to them that socialists were suspicious of big business men and supposedly politically neutral administrators, who needed to be removed from power as much as the Nazis. In a social revolution, he continued, the ruling classes would have been purged, but this had not happened in Germany and it was now difficult for Military Government to 'make a revolution at the point of a bayonet'.<sup>90</sup>

Albu found Robertson impressive at their first meeting and they appeared to develop an excellent working relationship, despite differences in their background and political outlook. This may have been helped by a sense of mutual respect, both having trained as engineers and having managed sizable factories, Robertson for Dunlop in South Africa and Albu for Aladdin in West London. Initially, Robertson appeared to have been suspicious of Albu, concerned at his direct line to Hynd.<sup>91</sup> However, in March he offered him a senior post in the administration. According to Albu, Robertson told him that they 'needed someone like me' and 'although I wasn't indispensable, he'd rather have me than a new man ... I rather think that from R[obertson] it was a pretty high compliment'.<sup>92</sup> The post on offer was that of 'Deputy Chairman of the Governmental Sub-Commission', one of two sub-commissions that,

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<sup>86</sup> FP MSS.65/199, 'Personal Notes', Oct. 1947

<sup>87</sup> AP 12/3, letter to his wife, 3 Aug. 1946

<sup>88</sup> AP 12/3, undated letter to his wife, postmarked 11 Feb. 1946

<sup>89</sup> AP 12/3, letter to his wife, 16 Feb. 1946

<sup>90</sup> AP 13/2, diary entries for 12 Feb, 14 Feb 1946

<sup>91</sup> FO 1030/303, letter from Robertson to Street, 26 March 1946

<sup>92</sup> AP 12/3, letter to his wife, 22 March 1946

according to Robertson, would determine policy and 'really rule the country.'<sup>93</sup> The salary, at £2,000 plus allowances, was generous, equivalent to that of a Major General.<sup>94</sup> Albu decided to accept and in April moved into a 'palatial office' in the generals' suite in the rather grandly named Lancaster House, the British headquarters building in Berlin.<sup>95</sup>

Yet, despite his senior position within the administration, Albu considered that his influence declined. To some extent this may have been due to his political isolation. He wrote to his wife that he felt lonely sometimes and had no friends. He told her that he got on well with his immediate superior, General Erskine, the Chairman of the Sub-Commission, who accepted his ideas and put his authority behind them, but his effectiveness was limited by the lack of firm policy direction from London.<sup>96</sup> He wrote around the same time that he felt increasingly isolated:

what with reactionary officers and utterly reactionary F.O. [Foreign Office] boys. T G Erskine seems both intelligent and politically reasonable. And there are many good soldiers. But good tho' they are at their jobs – so many have this militarism (almost Prussian) repressed emotionalism [sic] which makes them give vent to the most obscurantist ideas on subjects outside their own jobs. This includes an intense fear of 'politics'.<sup>97</sup>

His position in the administration seemed to be strengthened when he replaced Ingrams as Chairman of the Standing Committee on Governmental and Administrative Structure (SCOGAS) which, he told his wife, was the committee that would 'do the real policy stuff on the future constitution of this country',<sup>98</sup> but his ability to implement policy was still limited by Hynd's lack of influence in the government at home and his own lack of executive authority.

### **The Fusion Campaign in Berlin**

The 'Fusion' campaign in Berlin in early 1946, for and against the proposed merger of the socialist SPD with the communist KPD, was the first time after the war that the British authorities in Germany openly collaborated politically with Germans, their former enemy, in

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<sup>93</sup> AP 12/3, letter to his wife, 26 March 1946

<sup>94</sup> AP 12/3, letter of appointment, 31 May 1946; letter to his wife, 26 June 1946

<sup>95</sup> AP 12/3, letter to his wife, 14 April 1946

<sup>96</sup> AP 12/3, letter to his wife, 9 June 1946

<sup>97</sup> AP 12/3, letter to his wife, 3 Aug 1946

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

opposition to the declared policy of the Soviet Union, their former wartime ally.<sup>99</sup> As such it can be considered a precursor, or the first manifestation, of the Cold War within Germany, and an illustration of the processes by which many democratic socialists in both Britain and Germany, including Albu and Flanders, started to transfer their allegiance from support for a wartime 'popular front' with the communists against fascism, to an anti-communist alliance with conservative political parties in Britain, the US and Western Europe, to oppose what they perceived as Communist Party 'totalitarianism'.

Fusion of the SPD and KPD was promoted by the Soviet Union, as a way of securing an electoral majority for a merged party that could not be achieved by the communists alone. The origins of the issue lay in the view, widely held among members of both parties, that had they worked together more effectively in the 1930s, they could have prevented Hitler and the Nazis seizing power. In December 1945, the two parties agreed to work together on a common electoral programme.<sup>100</sup> In January 1946, the Central Committee of the SPD in Berlin, under pressure from the Soviet occupation authorities, decided in favour of the merger, but a significant number of SPD members remained opposed, unwilling to trust the KPD, fearing domination from Moscow, and recalling the disputes of the early 1930s, when the communists had labelled the SPD 'social fascists'.<sup>101</sup> On 1 March 1946 a meeting of SPD Berlin officials decided to hold a referendum on the issue, among members in the city.<sup>102</sup>

Some of the British staff in the political and intelligence divisions of the Control Commission in Berlin had been watching developments with concern as, if the merger between the two parties were to go ahead, it would be possible for the Russians to control the whole city through an elected German administration.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, if the merger were subsequently approved across all four zones, Russian influence, acting through a strong combined German communist and socialist party, would extend to the western zones, arousing long-

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<sup>99</sup> On the Fusion campaign see the monumental work by Harold Hurwitz, *Demokratie und Antikommunismus in Berlin nach 1945: Vol.4, Die Anfänge des Widerstands* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1990). For a contemporary British account see a report by Noel Annan in CAC AP 11/6 on 'The campaign for Fusion of the Social Democratic and Communist Parties in eastern Germany' and his later book Noel Annan, *Changing Enemies: The Defeat and Regeneration of Germany* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), pp187-197

<sup>100</sup> AP 11/6, Noel Annan, 'The campaign for Fusion of the Social Democratic and Communist Parties in eastern Germany', undated but marked in pencil '1946'

<sup>101</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p15. At a party conference in October 1932, Ernst Thälmann, KPD party leader, quoted Stalin's view that fascism and 'social fascism' were 'twin brothers'.

<sup>102</sup> Hurwitz, *Die Anfänge des Widerstands*, p864, pp1022ff

<sup>103</sup> AP 11/6, Noel Annan, 'The campaign for Fusion of the Social Democratic and Communist Parties'

standing fears of a German-Russian alliance<sup>104</sup> that could promote social revolution across the whole of Europe, as the Comintern had attempted to do in the 1920s. Official British policy, however, was to remain neutral and not favour any one political party in Germany.<sup>105</sup>

A key role in the internal German opposition to Fusion was played by around 20-30 former *Neu Beginnen* members who had remained in Germany and re-formed as a group in Berlin after the end of the war.<sup>106</sup> Although *Neu Beginnen* had supported cooperation with Russia against Nazi Germany, the group's members remained deeply suspicious of Communist Party tactics. Similar views were shared by the great majority of socialists in exile in London, who had resisted all attempts during the war to form a united front with the communists.<sup>107</sup> Kurt Schumacher, the leader of the SPD in the British Zone, was also firmly opposed to any form of cooperation with the Communist Party.

To some extent, therefore, the Fusion campaign was a battle for control of the SPD. The Berlin central committee, pressurised by the Soviet Union, declared in favour of Fusion, while the groups which opposed a merger with the Communists, including the newly formed party in the British Zone and the London exiles, were supported by the Western Allies. The stakes were high, as it was assumed that with the Nazis discredited and officially banned in all zones, the SPD would win any election for a future German administration and whoever controlled the SPD would control Germany.

At first, Albu took no part in these developments. Though fully aware of the situation, he appeared uncertain what to do. Two days after his arrival, on 3 February 1946, he joined a meeting arranged by Christopher Steel, the chief of the Political Division, with Otto Grotewohl and Gustav Dahrendorf, the leaders of the Berlin SPD central committee, who appeared to be looking for British support to resist Soviet pressure for Fusion, even though they had already declared in favour of the merger. The meeting was not productive.<sup>108</sup> Albu asked if an official statement from the Labour Party, opposing Fusion, would be helpful, but

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<sup>104</sup> Spencer Mawby, 'Revisiting Rapallo: Britain, Germany and the Cold War, 1945-1955' in Michael F. Hopkins, Michael D. Kandiah and Gillian Staerck (eds.), *Cold War Britain, 1945-1964* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp81-94

<sup>105</sup> FO 1050/130

<sup>106</sup> Hurwitz, *Die Anfänge des Widerstands*, pp33-50

<sup>107</sup> Keßler, *Kommunismuskritik im westlichen Nachkriegsdeutschland*, pp74ff; Eiber, *Die Sozialdemokratie in der Emigration*, pCVII, pp646-649

<sup>108</sup> Grotewohl continued to support Fusion, despite personal reservations, and became the first prime minister (*Ministerpräsident*) of the German Democratic Republic in 1949. Dahrendorf, however, changed sides shortly after the meeting, left Berlin with British assistance and moved with his son, Ralph Dahrendorf, to the British Zone.

they doubted if this would make any difference.<sup>109</sup> Two weeks later Albu met Kurt Schmidt, the leader of the *Neu Beginnen* group in Berlin and put him in touch with Schumacher, whom his British colleagues had invited to Berlin to support those opposed to Fusion.<sup>110</sup>

In early March, after the decision was taken at a meeting of Berlin SPD officials to hold a referendum in the city on the issue, Albu finally decided that he needed to become involved in the campaign. Using language that demonstrated the strength of his feelings, he noted in his diary that he had decided to stay in Berlin until the referendum on 31 March 'to try to organise the majority which was being raped by the Russ[ians] & the KPD.'<sup>111</sup> He wrote later that he was 'risking his reputation' as the official British policy at this time was not to engage in internal German political disputes. The precariousness of his position was illustrated when a small group of left wing Labour MPs in London took the opposite line to his, and sent a message to the Berlin SPD central committee in support of Fusion. Albu and his colleagues felt they had to counter this by holding a press conference to state that the message reflected the views of only a small part of a very much larger Parliamentary Labour Party.<sup>112</sup>

The campaign for and against Fusion became intense on both sides. The Russians, fearful of the result, banned the referendum in their sector of Berlin, but it took place with US, French and British support in the western sectors of the city. Albu still felt unable to declare British opposition to Fusion openly, but on the day of the referendum he wrote an article in the British licensed newspaper in Berlin urging SPD members to vote.<sup>113</sup> This amounted to the same thing, as newspapers in the Soviet sector had announced there was no need for a referendum, as seven out of the eight SPD districts in their sector had already decided in favour of a united party.<sup>114</sup> The result of the referendum was a decisive majority against Fusion, though voters also endorsed a second question, by a smaller majority, which supported collaboration with the communists but not a merger of the parties.<sup>115</sup> As a result, the SPD survived as an independent party in the western sectors of Berlin, whereas those SPD members who supported Fusion went ahead and merged with the KPD to form the

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<sup>109</sup> AP 13/2, diary entry for 3 Feb. 1946

<sup>110</sup> AP 13/2, diary entry for 25 Feb. 1946; AP 12/3, letter to his wife, 20 Feb. 1946

<sup>111</sup> AP 13/2, diary entry for 19 March 1946

<sup>112</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, pIII/17

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>114</sup> Hurwitz, *Die Anfänge des Widerstands*, pp1194-5

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, p1218. 19,526 Berlin SPD members voted against and 2,937 in favour of immediate fusion; 14,763 for and 5,599 against collaboration. In total 23,775 members voted, out of 32,547 entitled to vote.

Socialist Unity Party (SED), the governing party in the Soviet Zone and subsequently in East Germany, until reunification in 1990.<sup>116</sup>

The result could be seen as a success for Albu, in securing victory for his *Neu Beginnen* friends and the independence of the SPD in Berlin and the British Zone, but it was also a failure, as the SPD remained divided and he was unable to prevent its merger with the Communists in the Soviet Zone. The issue demonstrated how little scope he had for positive action. British support for the opponents of Fusion was organised mainly through Intelligence staff working for the Control Commission's political division in Berlin and subject to approval by Foreign Office officials in London.<sup>117</sup> In this as in many other issues, British influence was limited to creating space for the Germans to make their own decisions. It did not extend to determining the result.

#### **Ordinance no. 57: The devolution of power to the German *Länder***

*'Some of you may think we are going a little too far in putting so much on the Germans so short a time after the end of the war.'*<sup>118</sup>

Before leaving Germany in 1947, Albu oversaw the implementation of a number of governmental reforms, which came under his area of responsibility.<sup>119</sup> These included the reorganisation of the *Länder* in the British zone and the promulgation in December 1946 of Military Government Ordinance no. 57, which provided for the devolution of powers to local German administrations on a wide range of subjects, including education, local government and health. Ulrich Reusch has argued that Ordinance 57 represented a turning point in British policy,<sup>120</sup> and could be considered the 'Occupation Statute for the British Zone' as it defined the powers of the German regional *Land* governments and legally regulated their relationship with the British occupation authorities.<sup>121</sup> According to Reusch, the policy of devolution of power was initiated by the Foreign Office,<sup>122</sup> but this study tends to support

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p1232, p1278

<sup>117</sup> FO 371/55363

<sup>118</sup> AP 11/1, script for radio talk by Albu on 'Reform of Government in the British Zone', March 1947

<sup>119</sup> As Deputy Chairman of the Governmental Sub-Commission and, from July 1946, Chairman of SCOGAS, the Standing Committee on Governmental and Administrative Structure

<sup>120</sup> Reusch, 'Die Londoner Institutionen', p402

<sup>121</sup> Reusch, *Deutsches Berufsbeamtentum*, pp363-4

<sup>122</sup> Reusch, 'Die Londoner Institutionen', p402



Albu's claim in his memoirs<sup>123</sup> that British policy on the issue of the devolution of power and future federal structure of Germany was largely based on his and his colleagues' work in Germany, referring in particular to the view, outlined by Bevin in his speech in Parliament on 22 October 1946, that Germany should 'avoid the two extremes of a loose confederation of autonomous states and a unitary centralised state.'<sup>124</sup>

The origins of Ordinance 57 and a policy of devolution can be traced to a memorandum Robertson wrote a year earlier, in September 1945, on 'The Evolution of Control of Government in the British Zone' from the military Corps Commanders to civilian regional Commissioners.<sup>125</sup> Following comments from Control Commission staff, Montgomery issued two instructions, in December 1945 and March 1946. At the end of the first, he stated clearly that devolution of power to Germans was an essential part of the transfer from military to civilian rule:

The real essence of the change ... is that under Military Government we govern our zone through the Germans ... Civil control, on the other hand, means that the Germans govern themselves subject to control and supervision by us.'<sup>126</sup>

His second instruction, in March 1946, made a similar point more forcibly: 'the best people to deal with the many difficulties which beset GERMANY today are the Germans', and there was a need to 'build up German administrations in our zone.'<sup>127</sup>

The Foreign Office, at this stage, was reluctant to intervene directly, preferring to observe and comment from the sidelines. An official minuted that Montgomery's March memo was a 'valuable piece of stocktaking' and the views expressed looked 'as if they owe a lot to General Robertson'.<sup>128</sup> Another official commented that it was an 'impressive document', though Troutbeck, head of the German Political Department, added a cautionary note against proceeding too quickly:

Yes, but one wishes that we might be handing over a going concern to these new German administrators. They will be weak and untried organisations, hardly capable of coping with

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<sup>123</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, pIII/27

<sup>124</sup> Speech by Bevin, *HC Deb. vol.427, c1510*, in Beate Ruhm von Oppen (ed.), *Documents on Germany under Occupation 1945-1954* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1955), p182

<sup>125</sup> FO 1051/224; FO 1050/138

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*; FO 1030/148, 'The Evolution of Government in the British Zone', 3 Dec. 1945

<sup>127</sup> FO 1051/224, FO 1030/148 and BLM 88/8, 'The Evolution of Government in the British Zone (II)', 25 March 1946

<sup>128</sup> FO 371/55612

starvation and widespread unemployment. And if they fail, the loss will not be theirs alone.<sup>129</sup>

It was not until June 1946, following the failure of the Allies at the Paris Council of Foreign Ministers to agree a joint policy towards Germany, that Foreign Office officials decided to take a more active role.<sup>130</sup> In order to minimise the risk of over-strengthening the powers of any future central German government, Patrick Dean, who had replaced Troutbeck as head of the Foreign Office German Political Department, laid down three principles from which all policy should derive: maximum decentralisation of power from the centre to the regions and localities; maximum devolution of power and responsibility to the Germans; and, subject to the above, maximum acceptability to the Germans of future constitutional arrangements, to ensure that these would last and not be changed by a future independent German government.<sup>131</sup>

In parallel with these developments, Albu, in his capacity as Deputy-President of the Governmental Sub-Commission, had been working on the issue of the future governmental structure of Germany. In June, he circulated a paper, 'Germany: The nature of Federal Government', which showed he was thinking along similar lines to Dean in emphasising decentralisation, devolution of power and acceptability to the Germans, except that in accordance with his socialist principles, Albu placed a greater emphasis on the need for centralised economic planning, in order to maintain social and economic stability and full employment.<sup>132</sup>

The key point Albu made in the paper was consistent with Foreign Office thinking, that the failure by the Allies to agree on central administrations for Germany as a whole (at the Paris Council of Foreign Ministers which was then in session) made it necessary to reorganise the structure of government in the British Zone. After referring to federal arrangements in the United States, Australia, Canada and Switzerland as possible models, he concluded that: 'if it is desired to weaken the future power of Germany to make war, as great a degree of

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid

<sup>130</sup> FO 371/55614, C6002, 'Development of Government in the British Zone'; FO 371/55591, C10014, 'Future political structure of Germany'

<sup>131</sup> FO 371/55614, C6002, 'Development of Government in the British Zone', letter from Dean to Wilberforce, 1 July 1946

<sup>132</sup> FO 1051/224, memorandum on 'Germany: the Nature of Federal Government' with an attached note stating this had been prepared by the Deputy President, Governmental Sub-Commission. Undated, but probably written in June 1946, as Albu told his wife on 22 June 1946 (AP 12/3) that he was working on a paper on federalism.

decentralisation should be imposed as possible.' However, he qualified this by adding that if the central government did not have sufficient power to ensure stable social and economic conditions, there would be 'violent pressure' towards centralisation which could not be resisted. He envisaged a gradual development, delegating powers to the *Länder* immediately but requiring all German decisions at central or at regional level to be subject to Allied veto:

In this way a radical change in the structure of the German state could be brought about immediately and for an adequate time would remain under supervision until there was a reasonable assurance that it was workable and had popular support.<sup>133</sup>

Dean travelled to Berlin in August for a series of high level meetings with Robertson, Albu, Flanders and William Strang, the political adviser to the Military Governor and the principal Foreign Office contact within the Control Commission. Dean reported on his return to London that their views were closer than he had expected.<sup>134</sup> With the approval of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Office by-passed Hynd, who was on holiday in France, and invited Robertson and Strang to a meeting with Bevin in Paris to discuss a new draft directive, subsequently approved by the Prime Minister and Cabinet on 9 September 1946, instructing the Military Governor to accelerate 'the process of decentralisation territorially and devolution of powers to the Germans in the British Zone.'<sup>135</sup>

Before going to Berlin in August, Dean had prepared an extensive brief, outlining the reasons for a policy of decentralisation.<sup>136</sup> During the visit, marginal notes were added to the brief by Strang, including a comment that the Germans would not be attracted by a '*Staatenbund*', a loose federation of independent states, but would accept a '*Bundestaat*', a federal state. In a letter to his wife on 14 August, two days before Dean's visit, Albu used similar language to describe the current, de-centralised, political structure in the US Zone, as either a body of three dictators, one in each of the *Länder* in the zone, or 'a *Staatenbund* – that most inefficient of governments' and widely disliked within the Control Commission.<sup>137</sup> These terms had not been used previously in Foreign Office documents. This tends to

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid

<sup>134</sup> FO 371/55591, C10670, 'Note on a short visit to Berlin by Mr Dean between the evening of Friday, August 16<sup>th</sup> and the morning of Monday 19<sup>th</sup>

<sup>135</sup> CAB 129/12/40, 9 Sept. 1946; FO 800/466; FO 371/55591

<sup>136</sup> FO 371/55591, C10014, 'Future political structure of Germany'. The reasons Dean gave for a policy of de-centralisation were that they wished to collaborate with their western Allies to counter Soviet advocacy of a highly centralised Germany, build up western Germany economically and politically, devolve responsibility to Germans and reduce the cost of the occupation.

<sup>137</sup> AP 12/3, letter from Albu to his wife, 14 Aug. 1946

confirm Albu's claim that the formulation of policy as a compromise between the two options of a *Staatenbund* and *Bundestaat* originated within the Control Commission in Germany, and was subsequently adopted by the Foreign Office and by Bevin in his speech on 22 October.

Whereas the Foreign Office were advocating the maximum degree of decentralisation, the Control Commission, advised by Albu, fought a determined and largely successful rearguard action, not so much, as claimed by Reusch, to preserve their ability to impose a British model of government,<sup>138</sup> but to maintain sufficient powers within central government to enable centralised social and economic planning. The Control Commission's response to the Foreign Office September 1946 directive, for example, stated that an adequate standard of living 'would be unattainable without a considerable degree of central economic planning', the SPD, 'left-wing parties' and Trade Unions were opposed to an 'excessive degree of decentralisation' and their own proposals were a reasonable compromise between maximum de-centralisation and 'the necessity for ensuring economic control at the centre.'<sup>139</sup> Rather than the Labour Government taking the lead in implementing a socialist policy in Germany, it appears that Albu and his colleagues in the Control Commission were resisting Foreign Office pressure for 'maximum' de-centralisation, so that a future SPD central government in Germany could operate a planned economy on socialist principles.

Ordinance 57, which gave practical effect to the policy of devolution, came into effect from 1 December 1946.<sup>140</sup> It was not well received by German politicians who objected to it on the basis that too much authority was reserved to the Military Government. Albu responded to these criticisms in a talk to the German press in February 1947, in which he referred again to the need to preserve adequate central government powers:

The powers which have been reserved to the centre are those powers which are necessary to ensure the economic revival of Germany and to enable a reasonable degree of economic planning and of the distribution of very scarce raw materials ... I must again emphasise that until there is a Central Government for Germany there is no other way than the exercising of these powers by Military Government.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Reusch, *Deutsches Berufsbeamtentum*, pp363-4

<sup>139</sup> FO 371/55593, C12323, 'Policy in Germany', letter from Sholto Douglas to The Permanent Secretary, COGA, 5 Oct. 1946

<sup>140</sup> Beate Ruhm von Oppen (ed) *Documents on Germany under Occupation 1945-1954* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp192-195; 'This New Germany', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1 No.33, 21 Dec. 1946, p1

<sup>141</sup> AP12, 'Draft of a talk to German Press to be given by Mr. A.H. Albu', 8 Feb. 1947

Albu placed a greater emphasis than the Foreign Office on those powers which, to quote the *British Zone Review*, Military Government had 'reserved to itself in trust for a Government of Germany to be established at an unforeseeable date.'<sup>142</sup> However, it became clear over the following year that the reserved powers were unlikely to be exercised by a future German government in the way he had hoped, due to increased US influence over economic issues in the combined British and US 'Bizone', established on 1 January 1947. Furthermore, in a divided Germany of three western zones, the SPD was unlikely to obtain a sufficient majority to implement socialist policies. Albu grew increasingly pessimistic as to the prospects for a socialist Germany and his ability to make a positive contribution to the British occupation.

By the time he left Germany in November 1947, Albu believed there was little more he and his colleagues could achieve. He was no longer especially concerned about security, writing that 'this time we really have destroyed the German army, both its personnel and its physical assets.'<sup>143</sup> Nor was he unduly concerned, as he had been at the time of the Fusion campaign, that a united Germany might be dominated by the communists, now ascribing this view to the Foreign Office.<sup>144</sup> In a British Forces Network broadcast in March 1947, he said that, now the *Land* governments had taken office, 'the giving of orders no longer rests with Military Government officers.' German administrations needed to be monitored and controlled, and the British had to act as 'guides, philosophers and friends' of the German politicians.<sup>145</sup> Flanders used the same words to describe the 'most important sphere of his work' in his notes to his comrades on leaving Germany.<sup>146</sup>

In September 1947 Albu recommended that the size of the British Control Commission should be reduced to 2,178, roughly a tenth of its current size.<sup>147</sup> Reductions of this magnitude were not achieved until after 1950,<sup>148</sup> but the overall direction was clear. Apart from exercising the power of veto, there was little the British could do, as an occupying power, to promote either democratic renewal or a positive socialist policy. Those who remained would have to depend on their personal relationships with their German colleagues

<sup>142</sup> 'This New Germany', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.33, 21 Dec. 1946, p1

<sup>143</sup> AP 11/1, letter to C. O'Neill, 30 Jan. 1947

<sup>144</sup> Ibid

<sup>145</sup> AP 11/1, Control Commission BFN broadcast, 13 March 1947, 'Reform of Government in the British Zone.'

<sup>146</sup> FP MSS.65/199, 'Personal Notes' by Allan Flanders, Oct. 1947

<sup>147</sup> AP 28/3, Memorandum, 11 Sept. 1947.

<sup>148</sup> AP 12/2, letter from Albu to Mayhew 1 Nov. 1949 and reply 12 Dec 1949. Christopher Mayhew, Foreign Office minister for Germany, told Albu that numbers were around 7,000, but would be reduced further to 3,000-3,500 by December 1950.

and friends to promote what they considered positive reforms. Albu and Flanders decided they had done what they could in Germany and it was time to return to Britain.

### **Disengagement from Germany and return to Britain**

Albu's achievements in the area of governmental reorganisation did not change his pessimistic outlook on the economic and political situation, which dated back to his perception acquired during the Fusion campaign soon after his arrival in Germany, that Russian tactics were similar to those of the Nazis and economic conditions would favour the communists rather than democratic socialists. He wrote in his diary on March 25 1946, after posters supporting *Einheit* (a united party) appeared in Berlin:

Fresh Einheit [Unity] posters every day, all over the town. Demagogic & nationalistic  
"Einheit, Ein Reich ...."<sup>149</sup>

The posters actually said 'Ein Ziel, Ein Weg, Einheit' (one aim, one path, unity) which was uncomfortably close to the Nazi slogan 'Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer'.<sup>150</sup> Albu set out his conclusions in a memorandum written during the campaign. There was a 'growing realization', he wrote, that Fusion would be 'but another step in the squeezing out of the other Allies from Berlin.' He believed that the SPD was the only party which could gain the support of the working class, resist Communist pressure and remain democratic. It would, however, 'lose all influence in the eyes of the Germans if it appears as a puppet of the Western powers.' Hence any scope for direct action by the Allies to promote political reform was limited. Rather than looking to the British to implement a policy of social change, he recommended that the best way to counter communist influence was for German advisory boards to be invited to submit plans for socialisation, land reform, social legislation and 're-activating German industry'.<sup>151</sup>

Three months later, after a visit to the Ruhr that left him deeply depressed by the economic conditions he encountered there, he wrote to his wife:

I don't know if I can stick it. This is the worst area, of course. The people are on the verge of starvation, their industries are running out of raw material, pits & factories are closing down,

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<sup>149</sup> AP 13/2, diary entry for 25 March 1946

<sup>150</sup> AP 11/6 report by Annan on 'The campaign for Fusion of the Social Democratic and Communist Parties in eastern Germany'

<sup>151</sup> AP 28/3, memorandum, 14 March 1946

there's no material for re-building.... It seems a nonsense to be talking politics under the  
circs .... Already people are getting hysterical.... Why the hell did I come here?'<sup>152</sup>

Back in Berlin, he wrote a memo to Robertson, stating that their political activities were meaningless in the current economic situation. 'The only voice that will be listened to is that of a hysterical nationalist demagogy', now provided by the Communist Party, which was attracting former officers and Nazis into its ranks, just as the Nazi party in the 1920s had recruited former soldiers from the *Freikorps*. Echoing Montgomery's memo of 1 May, he wrote that the new nationalists would 'see the opportunity to rebuild Germany from the East':

We are, in fact, in danger of creating a condition of chaos in our Zone in which the work of the Control Commission, as such, will become futile. All that will be possible will be military occupation to prevent the chaos spreading beyond the boundaries of Germany and, presumably, to prevent the Russians taking over our Zone, either directly, or through the Communist Party.<sup>153</sup>

In March 1947, after a year in post, he wrote to Hynd that 'on some quite crucial matters the Foreign Office have departed from the principles which I think both you and I felt were essential here.' He was concerned that economic conditions, aggravated by the influx of millions of refugees, would 'create a demographic and economic position in Germany which was just impossible.' He was also 'intensely pessimistic' about the Bizonal agreement recently concluded with the Americans and feared that the continued policy of reparations would make it increasingly difficult to secure cooperation with local German administrations. Finally, if the Russians continued their current policy of taking reparations from current production, there would be no alternative to 'bringing the iron curtain down.'<sup>154</sup>

In April 1947 Hynd was replaced as Minister for Germany by Frank Pakenham, Lord Longford, and responsibility for the British administration of Germany was transferred to the Foreign Office from the Control Office for Germany and Austria (COGA), which until then had functioned as separate ministry. Albu stayed until October to complete his work of governmental reorganisation, before returning home to find another job and pursue his ambition of entering Parliament.

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<sup>152</sup> AP 12/3, letter to his wife, 24 May 1946

<sup>153</sup> AP 28/3, memorandum, 19 June 1946

<sup>154</sup> AP 11/1, letter from Albu to Hynd, 26 March 1947

Allan Flanders left Germany shortly after Albu, equally disillusioned. An article in *Socialist Commentary*, published in November 1946 while he was still in Germany,<sup>155</sup> endorsed British government policy of promoting economic recovery and making Germany, or at least the British Zone, self-supporting, but criticised the failure to implement a positive socialist policy. A decision to take the coal and heavy industries into public ownership had not been implemented. No progress had been made on land reform. Currency reform was 'long overdue' and, in the meantime, the black market flourished, preventing sound economic development. The government in London had failed to provide clear guidance or a coherent plan for the economy. Many military government officers regarded any plan as 'too socialistic' and spoke contemptuously of the Labour government in their officers' messes. Within Germany there was a shortage of suitably qualified socialists able to take over administration from supposedly politically neutral, but deeply traditional and conservative, German civil servants.<sup>156</sup>

In a report to his friends in the Socialist Vanguard Group in October 1947, shortly before he returned to England,<sup>157</sup> Flanders emphasised the personal benefits of his going to Germany, but could point to few concrete achievements. The work had been an invaluable personal experience and had given him an insight into the workings of the Foreign Office. His department had been responsible for a few 'restrictive measures', banning those who made overtly nationalist speeches from political activities. He claimed to have influenced British policy on dismantling and socialisation (ie public ownership) of industry, but although his views were adopted by the head of the Political Division, neither were ultimately successful – he was not able to prevent dismantling and socialisation of industry was never implemented. Perhaps surprisingly, given his earlier position at the TUC and his later role as an expert on industrial relations in Britain, he made no mention of any engagement with German trade unions. He was able to help his 'own comrades' in the ISK in a few minor ways, such as approving the licensing of a new journal *Geist und Tat* (Spirit and Deed), edited by Willi Eichler, the leader of the ISK who had now returned to Germany. In general, however, he

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<sup>155</sup> 'The British Zone', *Socialist Commentary*, Nov. 1946. All articles were unsigned, but this piece was very probably written by Flanders. He remained chairman of the editorial board throughout his time in Germany.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>157</sup> FP MSS.65/199, 'Personal Notes' by Allan Flanders, Oct. 1947. Another copy is in AP 12/2



wrote that the main purpose of his work appeared to be negative, that of 'stopping worse things happening.'<sup>158</sup> The one 'hopeful factor' he could point to was the strength of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), his ability to assist in its development, and the personal contacts he had been able to establish with Kurt Schumacher, the party leader, and his colleagues.<sup>159</sup>

The ISK had been dissolved at the end of 1945. Most of its members joined the SPD and returned to Germany. Some played an influential role in the post-war history of the Federal Republic, including former leader, Willi Eichler, who led the reform programme that culminated at Bad Godesberg with the SPD discarding its former Marxist ideology and adopting a democratic socialist model.<sup>160</sup> The Socialist Vanguard Group survived a few more years, but by 1950 there seemed little purpose in continuing with the organisation in its current form and the executive decided to dissolve it, to be replaced by a looser and less formal organisation, the Socialist Union.<sup>161</sup>

*Neu Beginnen* also ceased to operate as a separate group in 1945. Some of its former members remained in Britain, some returned to Germany and joined the SPD,<sup>162</sup> and some spent long periods working in both countries. The reason for the group's existence had been their opposition to fascism. Once Hitler was defeated, not by opposition from within Germany, but by the Allies, there was little reason for *Neu Beginnen* to continue as a separate organisation.

## 5.4 Conclusion

In the final paragraph of his unpublished memoirs, Albu wrote that:

At the end of a life of so many disappointments I must continue to believe in man as a thinking as well as a feeling animal; in the possibility of rational enquiry and argument and to keep the hope that progress in the quality of his life is still possible. The steps by which

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid

<sup>159</sup> Ibid

<sup>160</sup> Bailey, 'The European Discourse in Germany', p459; Black, 'Social Democracy as a Way of Life', p515

<sup>161</sup> Black, 'Social Democracy as a Way of Life'

<sup>162</sup> Eiber, *Die Sozialdemokratie in der Emigration*, pp828-841, letter from Erwin Schoettle to Karl Frank, 25 Nov. 1945, advising him of the decision to dissolve the group

these hopes and beliefs are to be achieved will not, however, be taken by my generation;  
but by my grandchildren and those who follow them to the end of time.'<sup>163</sup>

These words encapsulated both his and Flanders' transition from early idealism, through the desperate struggle against fascism, to post-war pragmatic democratic socialism. Soon after his return from Germany, Albu was selected as parliamentary candidate for Edmonton, following the death of Evan Durbin. He recalled the election campaign 'with something approaching horror', having to bear the brunt of the mid-term unpopularity of the Labour Government.<sup>164</sup> He was elected with a greatly reduced majority, but recovered in subsequent elections and continued to represent the constituency until he retired in 1974. Apart from a brief period as a junior minister from 1965-6, he remained on the back benches. He had little involvement in foreign affairs or matters concerning Germany, but was an early supporter of Britain's entry to the Common Market. Perhaps his earlier belief in a 'federation of free, democratic Socialist states of Europe' played a part in this, though it was to be a capitalist, not a socialist community of nations that helped to make another war in (Western) Europe impossible.

Albu and Flanders were in a difficult position and had limited scope for positive action. As outsiders in what was effectively a military government, they had neither the authority that Montgomery and his generals possessed as military commanders, nor the control of the bureaucratic apparatus of the Control Commission exercised by Robertson. Working for policy-making divisions at headquarters, they had no opportunity to exercise direct authority on the ground. Furthermore, their opportunities for indirect influence, through informal links and discussions with like-minded colleagues, were limited. Flanders was able to offer a degree of support to his German socialist colleagues through powers of licencing over political parties, the media and appointments, though, as he admitted in his notes on leaving Germany, this was more a negative achievement in preventing worse things happening than the positive influence he desired. Albu's genuine achievements in helping to create a federal structure in the British Zone were overshadowed by his pessimism regarding economic prospects, democratic development, and the lack of any fundamental social and political change.

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid, pXV/21

<sup>164</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, pp7-8

There were, of course, many reasons why the Federal Republic of Germany did not embark on a socialist course when it was founded in 1949, and why its first government was led by the CDU, under Adenauer, rather than the SPD, under Schumacher. These included the continued strength and influence of traditional German elites in the bureaucracy and industry and their ability to adjust to changed circumstances, US opposition to a planned economy and the socialisation of industry, and the preferences of the electorate as demonstrated in the first federal election in August 1949, which resulted in a narrow victory for the CDU over the SPD. However, a further contributory factor was that, despite the victory of the Labour Party in Britain in 1945 and the British government's cautious support for German socialists, the British Military Government was run by members of a conservative British professional establishment, comprising military generals, diplomats and professional administrators, who had no interest in promoting socialism, and did not share Albu's and Flanders' beliefs that the working class was the only democratic force left in Germany in 1945, or that the only way to prevent a resurgence of fascism was through actively promoting socialist policies.

On Albu's resignation from the Control Commission, General Robertson sent him a letter of appreciation of the work he had done, which reflected the nature of their relationship and the difference in approach between them. Albu was disappointed because his concrete achievements did not match up to his original hopes and expectations. Robertson replied with his understanding of their task in Germany:

You say that you wonder what you have achieved. Each of us makes a contribution, no man more than that, to the British effort in Germany. I believe very firmly that history will justify the British effort. Your contribution has been to bring to bear on our problems the influence of your liberal and well-trained mind. That is a very worth-while contribution, and there is no need to go further to seek concrete achievement.<sup>165</sup>

The contribution Austen Albu and Allan Flanders made to political renewal in Germany was not to impose their own vision, but to recognise the limits of what could be achieved by the British Military Government, to step back and allow the German authorities to take responsibility for their own actions. Their personal histories reflect a transition from pre-war idealistic international socialism, through the desperate struggle against fascism and the Nazi state and the experience of the Holocaust, to post-war pragmatic and national, rather

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<sup>165</sup> AP 13/2, handwritten letter from Robertson to Albu, 20 Dec. 1947

than international, social democracies. Many of their colleagues in *Neu Beginnen* and the ISK, in both Britain and Germany, followed similar trajectories, from radical, occasionally revolutionary, socialism, to social democracy, opposition to communist totalitarianism, and the reluctant acceptance of a market economy.

## 6 Henry Vaughan Berry: civilian regional commissioner for Hamburg: May 1946 – May 1949

*'I suppose it's absolute heresy to say so but my belief was that the British government during the war, Churchill and Roosevelt themselves, had no policy beyond unconditional surrender. What they were to do with the unconditional surrender when they got it – I really don't think they'd thought about it'*<sup>1</sup>



Vaughan Berry (left) with Max Brauer, *Bürgermeister* of Hamburg<sup>2</sup>

In May 1946, in an attempt to 'civilianise' the British administration of Germany, four Regional Commissioners were appointed to replace the military Corps Commanders. The commissioners were nominated by John Hynd, the government minister for Germany and approved by the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee and the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quote by Berry from BBC Written Archives, transcript of the TV series 'Zone of Occupation', programme 1, 'Year Zero', first broadcast 1 Nov. 1981, p16. The same quote was used by Charles Wheeler at the start of his Radio 4 programme, 'Germany: Misery to Miracle', first broadcast 8pm, 19 Sept. 2005

<sup>2</sup> Photograph from private family archive

<sup>3</sup> FO 371/55612, 'Appointment of Regional Commissioners.'

Three of the commissioners were civilians and active Labour Party supporters, the fourth an army general. Those appointed in addition to Berry were William Asbury, a former leader of Sheffield City Council and Hugh de Crespigny, a former Air Vice-Marshal who had resigned his position in 1944 to stand, unsuccessfully, for Parliament as a Labour Party candidate.<sup>4</sup> The fourth commissioner, General Gordon Macready, had been chief of staff in Washington during the war.<sup>5</sup> The appointment of Regional Commissioners was a key element of the policy to decentralise government of the British Zone, devolve power to the *Länder* and govern by indirect rather than direct control.

Henry Vaughan Berry was appointed regional commissioner for Hamburg where he worked closely with the city's social democratic (SPD) administration. Unlike Austen Albu and Allan Flanders, he had no links with German socialist groups in exile in London. His main qualifications for the position appear to have been his experience as a young man on the staff of the Inter-Allied High Commission for the occupation of the Rhineland after the First World War and his personal connections with leading members of the Labour Party including Herbert Morrison and Hugh Dalton.<sup>6</sup> Unusually for a Labour Party activist, Berry worked between the wars in a senior position in the City of London, as assistant manager of the Union Discount Company.<sup>7</sup> Concerned at what he perceived to be a lack of understanding of financial matters among the Labour leadership in the 1930s, he founded an influential pressure group of Labour sympathisers in the City, the XYZ Club.<sup>8</sup> Yet despite his financial background, he was not involved in discussions regarding economic policy for the British Zone, or the proposed currency reform implemented in June 1948.

Berry's region of Hamburg could be considered the most favourable of all the *Länder* in the zone for effective cooperation between British and Germans. The city had a long tradition of self-government and well established trading connections with Britain and the United States.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. De Crespigny was recommended for the post by Hugh Dalton.

<sup>5</sup> FO 371/55612, 'Appointment of Regional Commissioners'. Montgomery and Robertson requested that one commissioner should be a senior army officer, as they believed this would be 'gratifying to the military element of the Control Commission. Macready wrote later that it was thought desirable to have a general in his region, Lower Saxony, 'owing to the long common frontier with the Russian Zone and the likelihood of incidents requiring co-operation with the Army.' Lt-General Sir Gordon Macready, *In the Wake of the Great* (London: William Clowes and Sons Ltd, 1965), p206

<sup>6</sup> FO 371/55612, 'Appointment of Regional Commissioners.'

<sup>7</sup> The Union Discount Company of London was the leading player in the London money market, offering short term loans to international trading organisations on the security of bills of exchange guaranteed by London merchant banks.

<sup>8</sup> Bath Record Office (henceforward BRO), 'The Life and Times of Sir Vaughan Berry', set of 45 discs (henceforward 'Berry Memoir'), discs 29-33; Somerset Heritage Centre, Berry Papers, (henceforward SHC), A/BCU4, Note by Berry on 'XYZ – The Early Days'

Economic revival after the war was adversely affected by Allied restrictions on foreign trade, the destruction of the German merchant marine and dismantling of the shipbuilding industry, but Hamburg still had great strategic importance as the largest city in the Zone and the main port of entry for goods and supplies.<sup>9</sup> Though badly destroyed in the firestorms of 1943, conditions were not as bad as had been feared. Although half the living accommodation was destroyed and 100,000 inhabitants lost their lives during the war, the city was not damaged in the land-based campaigns in April and May 1945, surrendering without a shot being fired. Telephone connections, electricity and water supplies continued uninterrupted.<sup>10</sup>

Berry's tenure as Regional Commissioner was considered at the time to have been highly successful by both British and Germans. He received glowing tributes from the German press when he left Hamburg,<sup>11</sup> and was awarded a knighthood on his return to Britain. Recent historians have been more critical of British occupation policy, while acknowledging that Anglo-German relations were generally better in Hamburg than elsewhere. This chapter discusses Berry's aims and intentions and some of the successes and failures of British occupation policy in Hamburg. It concludes by considering whether his experience in Hamburg, though not necessarily typical of the zone as a whole, was an example of a successful 'benevolent occupation' under relatively favourable conditions.

## 6.1 A meritocratic socialist who served in the Rhineland occupation

*'The excellence of the political system depends not on its conformity to some ideal standards, but whether it is able to secure the services of the ablest of its citizens, and to produce stable and effective government.'*<sup>12</sup>

Henry Vaughan Berry was born in 1891 and was therefore closer in age to Harold Ingrams and the generals considered in the first part of this thesis, than to his fellow socialists Austen

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<sup>9</sup> Hilary Ann Balshaw, *The British Occupation in Germany, 1945-1949 with special reference to Hamburg* (PhD Diss: Oxford, 1972), p53

<sup>10</sup> Michael Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg: Besatzerleben 1945-1958* (Munich and Hamburg: Dölling und Gallitz Verlag, 2011), pp84-5

<sup>11</sup> Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg*, p255; SHC, A/BCU9

<sup>12</sup> Berry memoir, disc 44, speech delivered at the opening of the Hamburg *Bürgerschaft*, 22 Nov. 1946

Albu and Allan Flanders.<sup>13</sup> He said later that he became a socialist after the First World War, influenced by events in Germany,<sup>14</sup> though it seems likely that his political beliefs were strongly influenced by his childhood and education. His father moved from the small Wiltshire town of Melksham to London and then to Madras in India, where he set up a stockbroking business, lived in a grand house and appeared very wealthy. Berry and his two sisters were born in Madras. They returned to England with their mother for what they believed would be a short holiday, but received a telegram telling them that their father had died of pneumonia. His fortune disappeared and the family was left with a 'few hundred pounds', generating an annual income of £40, not enough to live on. Berry was just four years old at the time and spent the rest of his childhood in genteel poverty. His mother had to leave home to work as a governess and he and his two sisters moved to Bath, where they lived with two maiden aunts, who had depended on his father for their livelihood.<sup>15</sup>

Berry's early life was a struggle to obtain an education that matched his ability. With help from his godfather, he left home aged seven, to attend a boarding school, the 'Royal Asylum of St Anne's', at Redhill in Surrey. He described it later as a 'charity school' for 'those who had come down in the world',<sup>16</sup> quite different from the public and preparatory schools attended by the middle and upper classes, adding that it was an 'amoral and stupid system ... to educate the rich separately.'<sup>17</sup> Berry did well at the school, becoming head boy. He obtained a scholarship to the City of London School to continue his education, but this did not improve the family's finances, as the scholarship covered only one third of the fees. He won another scholarship to Cambridge University, but again, this did not fully cover his costs, and he could only accept the place after being offered financial assistance from an education trust established by a Scottish peer.<sup>18</sup>

His later socialism was meritocratic, placing greater emphasis on equality of opportunity, 'from each according to his abilities', than the redistribution of wealth and alleviation of poverty, 'to each according to his needs.' He was opposed to unearned wealth and privilege,

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<sup>13</sup> Montgomery was born in 1887, Douglas in 1893, Robertson in 1896, Bishop and Ingrams in 1897; Albu in 1903 and Flanders in 1910.

<sup>14</sup> Berry memoir, disc 25

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, discs 1-3

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, disc 4. Pupils were sponsored by members of the school trust and were charged no fees for education, food or accommodation, until they reached the age of 15, when they had to leave.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, disc 5

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, discs 5-8



but remained elitist rather than egalitarian, believing that those with ability should have the opportunity to progress to positions of responsibility in society. At the same time, he possessed a great sense of duty to others, probably arising from the knowledge that his mother, aunts and sisters had sacrificed their own welfare, so that he could obtain his education. He believed in the value of education, the aim of which he considered was to learn to think clearly and rationally. He wrote in later life that 'if your thinking is muddled I do not see how you can make a success of anything, except by chance.'<sup>19</sup>

He studied French and German at university and spoke both languages fluently, having spent six months in each country through a school scholarship in 1909. He greatly enjoyed his stay in Germany, in a small town near Hanover, where he enjoyed going on walks with the local boys through the forests, playing football, parading in front of the girls and drinking beer at the local *Kneipe*.<sup>20</sup> He recalled writing to his mother that:

Germany is a marvellous country for electricity, houses, railways etc. but in politics they are 300 years behind!<sup>21</sup>

He served in the First World War as an officer in Salonika, Ireland and France, where he was wounded.<sup>22</sup> Towards the end of the war, a chance encounter in London with his former university tutor led to a transfer to the Intelligence Corps and a posting with the army of occupation in the Rhineland. His work as intelligence officer involved travelling from one town to another, often in German civilian clothes and with a German passport, talking to the local people and trying to assess their mood and attitudes.<sup>23</sup>

The inflation of 1920 made a deep impression on him and, in later life, he would speak of how 'the hardships experienced by the middle classes were one of the chief recruiting grounds for Hitler.' His 'favourite story' was that of a retired elderly jeweller and his wife, with whom he was billeted for several months. Before the inflation the jeweller had been wealthy, with an income equivalent to £800 a year, able to support an extended family as the 'rich uncle'. Within three months he had lost all his money and had to work again. The family were appalled by what had happened to him and the next generation joined the Nazi party. Berry

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<sup>19</sup> Private family archive, letter from Berry to his great-niece, 10 June 1971

<sup>20</sup> Berry memoir, disc 7

<sup>21</sup> Private family archive, letter from Berry to his great-niece, Dec. 1975

<sup>22</sup> Berry memoir, discs 13-15

<sup>23</sup> Berry memoir, discs 15-16

sympathised with the jeweller, perhaps relating his experience of having 'come down in the world' to that of his own family.<sup>24</sup>

In 1920 he joined the Inter-Allied Control Commission and was appointed District Officer for a small town, Benrath, near Düsseldorf. He subsequently acquired additional responsibilities for the larger and strategically important district of Solingen in the Ruhr.<sup>25</sup> He was well placed to see at first hand the occupation of Düsseldorf by French troops in 1921 and the subsequent occupation of the Ruhr in 1924. Together with many of his British colleagues, he sympathised with the Germans rather than the French.<sup>26</sup> In notes for a speech he gave in 1962, he outlined his understanding of the period: the young Weimar Republic never had a chance; the steps taken by the Allies were all too little too late; in the late 1920s, Germany was hit by the world economic crisis; it was the 6 million unemployed that gave Hitler his real opportunity and within 3 years he was in power. There were clear parallels, his notes continued, between his experiences after World War One and when he returned to Germany in 1946. On both occasions he had seen hunger, a ration of only 1000 calories, and inflation in which people lost nine tenths of their savings. The scale of destruction and disruption to society was even worse after the Second World War than the first, with at least 6 million people dead and missing and 2-3 million refugees entering the British Zone from the east. Above all there was no Government or authority with which to deal. The conclusion he drew was that to avoid continuing chaos, 'the Allies had to take steps to rehabilitate Germany'.<sup>27</sup>

Similar critical views of Allied policy after the First World War were common in the 1920s among British people in the occupied Rhineland, such as the distinguished journalist Eric Gedye,<sup>28</sup> whom Berry first met in Germany in 1919 when both were young officers in the

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<sup>24</sup> Berry memoir, disc 16; Private family archive, letter from Berry to his great-niece, 20 Dec. 1973

<sup>25</sup> Berry memoir, discs 17-19

<sup>26</sup> David G. Williamson, *The British in Germany 1918-1930: the Reluctant Occupiers* (New York, Oxford: Berg, 1991), p347. See also 'Apex', *The Uneasy Triangle: Four Years of the Occupation* (London: John Murray, 1931), G.E.R. Gedye, *The Revolver Republic: France's Bid for the Rhine* (London: J.W. Arrowsmith Limited, 1930), B.T. Reynolds, *Prelude to Hitler* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933), Ferdinand Tuohy, *Occupied: 1918-1930: a Postscript to the Western Front* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1931), Katharine Tynan, *Life in the Occupied Area* (London: Hutchinson, 1925), Violet Markham, *A Woman's Watch on the Rhine* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1921)

<sup>27</sup> SHC, A/BCU7, Notes for speech on 'The Problem of Germany'

<sup>28</sup> According to his entry in the Dictionary of National Biography, Gedye was 'the greatest British foreign correspondent of the inter-war years.' Hugh Greene, 'Gedye, (George) Eric Rowe (1890-1970)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

[<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/catalogue/urls.lon.ac.uk/view/article/33362> accessed 29 April 2012].

Gedye's articles as special correspondent for *The Times* were widely read in Britain and were credited by the *Manchester Guardian* for foiling French plans to promote a separatist Rhineland Republic. See Gedye, *The Revolver Republic*, p252

army of occupation.<sup>29</sup> Gedye wrote that by imposing harsh conditions in the Treaty of Versailles, attempting to annex territory and supporting Rhineland separatists, the Allies reinforced reactionary forces within Germany, rather than improving security and deterring renewed aggression. Furthermore, by misusing their superior military power during the occupation, rather than acting in strict accordance with the law, they fatally weakened the Social Democratic government, set the example of rule by force and paved the way for a nationalist revival:

Month after month we watched the spontaneous efforts of the German people ... to secure and consolidate the ground which had been won for democracy being foiled by Allied severity and distrust.<sup>30</sup>

The 'pro-German' views of Berry and his friend Gedye, that the rise of nationalism and the Nazi seizure of power had, at least in part, been caused by a failure by the Allies to support progressive forces within Germany in the 1920s, were quite distinct from the views of those who supported appeasement in the 1930s. Gedye left Germany in 1925 to take up a position in Vienna, where he remained until 1938. His second book, *Fallen Bastions*,<sup>31</sup> was a searing indictment of Nazi brutality and condemned the British government's failure to stand up to Hitler and resist the invasions of Austria and Czechoslovakia.

When Berry returned to Germany a second time in 1946, the conclusions he drew from his experiences in the occupied Rhineland were similar to those of General Robertson and other senior army officers described earlier,<sup>32</sup> that while disarmament was necessary, a harsh occupation based on a desire for revenge was not only wrong but counter-productive. However much the British may, as Berry wrote later, have 'hated and detested Germany and the Germans as a result of the war'<sup>33</sup> the only alternative, in their own interest, was a constructive policy of economic reconstruction, active support for democratic German politicians and personal reconciliation.

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<sup>29</sup> They remained friends and Berry later referred to Gedye's *The Revolver Republic* as 'the best account of the period.' *Berry memoir, discs 20, 22*. See also Gedye, *The Revolver Republic*, p238; SHC, A/BCU3.

<sup>30</sup> Gedye, *The Revolver Republic*, pp37-38

<sup>31</sup> G.E.R. Gedye, *Fallen Bastions: The Central European Tragedy* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1939)

<sup>32</sup> See above pp63-66

<sup>33</sup> BRO, Berry Papers, letter to the historian Ulrich Reusch, undated but probably March 1978

## 6.2 Active cooperation, shared ideals and aims

*'In Hamburg, why was I supposed to be successful – because the socialist govt. of the province knew that basically I shared their ideals and therefore they would put [up] with orders from me which they would not without trouble from another.  
It was just a matter of ideals.'*<sup>34</sup>

Berry claimed later that he was offered and accepted the position as Regional Commissioner in Germany due to chance. He had hoped to be appointed a director of the Bank of England. These hopes were not realised, so he negotiated early retirement from the Union Discount Company and made arrangements to retire to the country. According to Berry, Morgan Philips, the general secretary of the Labour Party, told him, when they met by chance at the House of Commons after an XYZ Club meeting, that 'the government needed people who shared its political convictions.' Philips asked him if he would like to be 'the governor of a small colony', to which Berry replied 'no'. Philips then suggested: 'Would you like to be a Commissioner in Germany?'<sup>35</sup>

In due course Berry was offered the post. Although he was interested, his wife was reluctant to move. The older of their two sons, Michael, had died in July 1944 from an unknown illness in Egypt. Berry was about to decline the offer when another personal tragedy changed their future outlook and expectations. Their second son, Peter, who was training to be a doctor, was killed in a motorcycle accident. Berry described how:

His death after that of Michael two years before ... was a shock in the real sense of the word. But when it came to deciding our own next moves, it seemed clear, or at any rate very likely, that a totally different sphere and a totally different world would be best for both of us.<sup>36</sup>

Their 'dream of having two fine sons each in a fine profession,' which he 'had sometimes said was too good to be true,' was shattered.<sup>37</sup> Rather than retreating into private life, his personal experience of loss appears to have heightened his sense of duty and obligation to others, and he accepted the position in Germany.

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<sup>34</sup> Private family archive, letter from Berry to his great-niece, Xmas 1976

<sup>35</sup> Berry memoir, discs 40-41

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, disc 41

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

Berry claimed later that he received no serious briefing on his role as Regional Commissioner and 'no hint ...of the kind of policy we were to adopt in our different regions.'<sup>38</sup> He appeared unaware of the planning that had been done for the occupation and the numerous directives issued to Control Commission staff. After a brief spell as Regional Commissioner for Westphalia, before the merger with North Rhine Province to form the new *Land* of North Rhine-Westphalia, he moved to Hamburg. Elections were held soon after he arrived, resulting in victory for the SPD. The previous *Bürgermeister*, a conservative who had been appointed by the British, was replaced by a socialist, Max Brauer, who had returned from exile in the United States and was untainted by any connection with the Nazis.<sup>39</sup> Without being specific as to how this affected their relationship, Berry claimed that their sharing a socialist 'fundamental philosophy ... proved to be of enormous help to me during the ensuing three years.'<sup>40</sup>

Berry was concerned that both he and his staff should establish a good working relationship with the German administration in Hamburg. He took great care over a speech he gave on 22 November 1946 at the ceremonial opening of the *Bürgerschaft* or city parliament.<sup>41</sup> The content of the speech was unremarkable, emphasising that free elections had been held in the city for the first time in 15 years, that he was a civilian and not a military governor and that during the election he had permitted the greatest possible freedom of speech, including criticism of the British military government. More important was the tone, which he intended to be as conciliatory as possible, and the fact that he delivered the speech in German. He said later that, had he spoken in English, 'they probably would have paid little attention, taking it as a mere formality'.

Germans are very conceited about their knowledge of foreign languages and would sit up and take notice if they found their new civil governor speaking to them in what I flatter myself was fluent German.<sup>42</sup>

At the end of the speech he referred to his officials being 'ready at all times to discuss your problems in a spirit of co-operation.' The ceremony was followed by a dinner, at his own expense, to which he invited the new 'senators', as the ministers in the city government were

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg* p366; *British Zone Review*, Vol.1 No.43, May 10 1947, p6

<sup>40</sup> Berry memoir, disc 43

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, discs 43-44

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, disc 43

called, and some of his own staff. This, he believed, was 'well worth any expense, because it meant that the new administration started off at least on a friendly basis with my senior officials.'<sup>43</sup>

Berry quickly established excellent relations with the new mayor, Max Brauer,<sup>44</sup> whose aims he appears to have made his own. In his first monthly report as Commissioner for the city in January 1947, Berry outlined four aims for the year: to deliver the full ration of 1,550 calories, create a reserve of fuel, remove uncertainty over reparations and complete the process of denazification.<sup>45</sup> These were all issues of immediate concern to the local population. At the end of the year, in another speech to the *Bürgerschaft*, again in German, Berry reviewed progress against his four aims, again striking a conciliatory tone.<sup>46</sup> All except the first, he said, had been achieved, though significant problems remained. They had all expected too much, too soon from the peace, in Britain as well as in Germany. For two and a half years, English and German officials had worked side by side, learning to understand, trust and respect each other. He concluded by referring to the great fire of Hamburg in 1842 when much of the city had been destroyed, saying he trusted that the same spirit which guided its reconstruction then was still alive in the city.<sup>47</sup>

Throughout his tenure as commissioner, Berry represented the interests of the city to the British authorities and advocated special measures, such as subsidised inland transport rates, which would benefit the port.<sup>48</sup> In his first monthly report, in January 1947, he wrote that 'I feel it is still necessary to stress the fact that a big metropolis always presents special difficulties.'<sup>49</sup> Later in the year, the city was declared an emergency area (*Notstandsgebiet*) after the food ration was cut by a third to an average of 1,000 calories a day and 200,000 people attended a hunger demonstration.<sup>50</sup> Berry wrote in his monthly report:

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, disc 44

<sup>44</sup> Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg*, p366

<sup>45</sup> SHC, A/BCU8, Monthly Report for Jan. 1947

<sup>46</sup> SHC, A/BCU7, speech dated 29 Dec. 1947

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg*, p369

<sup>49</sup> SHC, A/BCU8, Monthly Report for Jan. 1947

<sup>50</sup> Michael Wildt, *Der Traum vom Sattwerden; Hunger und Protest, Schwarzmarkt und Selbsthilfe in Hamburg 1945-1948* (Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 1986), p56; Arnold Sywottek, 'Verständigung mit den "Engländern" nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Zu einem noch ungeschriebenen Kapitel der "Vielvölkerstadt" Hamburg' in Frank Otto and Thilo Schulz (eds.), *Großbritannien und Deutschland: gesellschaftliche, kulturelle und politische Beziehungen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Rheinfelden: Schäuble Verlag, 1999), p150

It is high time that the Bi-Zonal food authorities paid some attention to Hamburg's plea for special consideration.<sup>51</sup>

The food situation improved, but he continued to advocate special treatment for the city in other areas. When a list of factories to be dismantled was published in late 1947, he reported that the reaction from the city's population was generally reasonable, but there was 'of course one reservation for Hamburg.' The future permitted level of the shipbuilding industry had not yet been decided and it would be 'a great mistake to settle what for this great Port is a vital matter without consultation with the people of Hamburg.'<sup>52</sup>

Berry's principal concerns, however, as expressed in his monthly reports to the Military Governor and senior British headquarters staff, were to keep order, avoid discontent and represent British interests. The welfare of the inhabitants and good relations with the city's German administration were the means by which he achieved these ends. If Berry assisted Brauer by advocating special treatment for the city, Brauer helped Berry maintain order, defuse conflicts and restrain public opposition to the occupation.<sup>53</sup>

### **6.3 The 'Hamburg Project': from defusing conflict to promoting a common interest**

*The burgomaster [Brauer] stated that if we stopped at the right point we could defend our reasons ... The British and German authorities were "in the same boat", and both sides would be blamed in Hamburg for spending money unnecessarily.<sup>54</sup>*

Berry arrived in Hamburg in September 1946 at a difficult time. Relations with the local German population had started to deteriorate, following widespread protests against the continued requisitioning of houses for occupation personnel.<sup>55</sup> The winter of 1946-7 was the worst in living memory. The River Elbe froze and ships carrying essential supplies could only reach the port through a channel cut by icebreakers. Unable to dock at the wharves, they

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<sup>51</sup> SHC, A/BCU8, Monthly Report for June 1947

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, Monthly Report for Oct. 1947

<sup>53</sup> Frances Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter in Occupied Hamburg, 1945-50* (PhD Diss: Columbia University, 2006), p151

<sup>54</sup> FO 1014/890, 'Minutes of a meeting of the Regional Commissioner's conference with the Burgomaster and members of the Building Administration', 1 April 1947

<sup>55</sup> Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg*, p142; Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter*, pp136-7; Berry memoir, disc 45

had to unload into lighters in mid-stream.<sup>56</sup> In January and February, 85 people froze to death, and a further 200 died each month from inflammation of the lungs.<sup>57</sup> Due to a shortage of coal, the supply of electricity was reduced to maintain essential services.<sup>58</sup> The suburban railways ceased to run, trams stopped at 8pm and theatres and cinemas remained closed.<sup>59</sup> Building was at a standstill.<sup>60</sup> Because no coal was available for domestic heating, there was massive thieving of coal from freight trains arriving in the marshalling yards, with crowds of up to 30,000 taking part.<sup>61</sup> Berry reported that 6,000 people were arrested for stealing coal in January, 17,000 in February and 11,000 in March.<sup>62</sup> Unsurprisingly, he expressed concern over the authorities' ability to keep order. Unable to resolve shortages of food and fuel, he decided on a token gesture of increasing unemployment relief to a level sufficient to purchase 'rationed necessities'. 'Without the prospect of this particular concession,' he wrote, 'which at least gave evidence of a sympathetic attitude with the plight of the people, public order would not have been maintained.'<sup>63</sup> 'The price was cheap' he added in his report. He retained the support of the *Bürgermeister* and 'responsible trade union leaders', and there were relatively few disturbances in the city over the winter.<sup>64</sup> In April, the *Bürgermeister* authorised the German police to use firearms, and arrests for stealing coal ceased with the warmer weather.<sup>65</sup>

Berry had good reason to be concerned about possible unrest. The city was badly overcrowded, with little prospect of any improvement in the immediate future, due to British plans to concentrate zonal headquarters in Hamburg, rather than in the small towns in Westphalia where the army was stationed at the end of the war. This scheme, known as the 'Hamburg Project' had been agreed in 1945. In the second half of 1946, it became the focus of opposition to the occupation in Hamburg. The original plan envisaged an imperial-style 'enclave' in the city, requiring the evacuation of up to 50,000 German civilians to make room

<sup>56</sup> Berry memoir, disc 45; SHC, ABCU8, Monthly Report for Feb. 1947

<sup>57</sup> Michael Wildt, *Der Traum vom Sattwerden; Hunger und Protest, Schwarzmarkt und Selbsthilfe in Hamburg 1945-1948* (Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 1986), p47

<sup>58</sup> Axel Schildt, 'Das "Hamburg project"'. Eine kritische Phase der britischen Besatzungspolitik in Hamburg 1945-47' in Otto and Schulz (eds.), *Großbritannien und Deutschland*, pp131-2

<sup>59</sup> SHC, A/BCU8, Monthly Report for Feb. 1947

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Wildt, *Der Traum vom Sattwerden*, p121

<sup>62</sup> SHC, A/BCU8, Monthly Reports for Feb. and March 1947

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, Monthly Report for Jan. 1947

<sup>64</sup> Wildt, *Der Traum vom Sattwerden*, p51

<sup>65</sup> SHC, A/BCU8, Monthly report for April 1947



for around 30,000 British personnel.<sup>66</sup> In June 1946 a revised, slightly smaller, plan was announced and work started, resulting in the eviction of 650 German civilians.<sup>67</sup> A peaceful protest by 500 German women, handing in a petition at the Town Hall, grew rapidly over the course of the day to around 10,000 people. The mood of the demonstrators deteriorated and they became increasingly antagonistic to the British, shouting 'we are not Indians or coolies' and singing the German national anthem.<sup>68</sup> Brauer's predecessor as *Bürgermeister*, Rudolf Petersen, tried to speak to the crowd from a balcony but was shouted down.<sup>69</sup> Ten demonstrators were arrested and a few days later sentenced, in a special session of the British military court, to a total of 27 years imprisonment.<sup>70</sup>

Berry claimed later that he threatened to resign if the plan was not abandoned. He recalled in his memoir that he considered it 'politically disastrous' as:

It seemed to be treating a very ancient city in Europe in much the same way as a town in India or China with its cantonments and its international settlements and to preclude any possibility of furthering reasonably good relations between the occupation and the Germans.<sup>71</sup>

He added that he made his views known to the Military Governor, Sholto Douglas and his deputy, Brian Robertson; the matter was discussed at the Regional Commissioners' conference in Hamburg and it was decided to abandon the project.<sup>72</sup>

Although Berry's memoir is generally reliable and consistent with documents in the archives, I have been unable to confirm his claim that he offered to resign. The minutes of a Regional Commissioners' conference held in Hamburg in December 1946 made no reference to the Project,<sup>73</sup> although it appears, from references in other documents,<sup>74</sup> that a decision to suspend it was taken at an earlier, unrecorded, high-level meeting. Berry flew to London to advise the government of the decision. He wrote to Robertson from London on 28 December 1946, to say he had notified Hynd of the decision. Hynd, Berry continued, was annoyed as

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<sup>66</sup> Schildt, 'Das "Hamburg project"', pp137-139

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, pp140-143; FO 1014/890, 'Notes for the Commander' on progress to date, by L.G Holmes, 27 June 1946

<sup>68</sup> Schildt, 'Das "Hamburg project"', pp143-145; FO 1014/48

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Berry memoir, disc 43

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> FO 1005/1354

<sup>74</sup> Such as a brief reference to the decision to suspend the project in FO 1014/15, minutes of an informal conference of Regional Commissioners with the Chancellor (Hynd), 15 Jan. 1947

he had prepared, but not submitted, a Cabinet paper recommending continuation.<sup>75</sup> Robertson replied that 'Hynd's reaction to our decision' surprised him, but he hoped to 'smooth him down' on his next visit to Germany.<sup>76</sup> This indicates that Robertson endorsed the decision to suspend the project and it was probably more consensual than Berry suggested in his memoir.

Berry was not alone in his opposition to the project. It had been extensively criticised in Parliament, notably by Richard Stokes MP who referred to it in a House of Commons debate in October 1946 as the 'Hamburg Poona', alluding to similarities with imperial enclaves in India, from which the native inhabitants were excluded.<sup>77</sup> Berry's predecessor as Military Governor in Hamburg, Brigadier Armytage, also opposed the project, writing a strongly worded memo to Robertson in July 1946, drawing his attention to the 'extremely serious situation' which had arisen due to evictions required for the Hamburg Project, evictions elsewhere in the city to provide accommodation for British families and the general shortage of building materials.<sup>78</sup> Armytage estimated that by September, 6,000 German families would need to be evicted. Due to the shortage of alternative accommodation, they could only be housed by 'doubling up' with other families in already overcrowded homes. He told Robertson he had agreed with the *Bürgermeister* that alternative accommodation would be found for 6,000 families, but no more. He would not 'agree to any further evictions than those already referred to unless I receive direct orders from you to do so.'<sup>79</sup>

An equally strongly worded memo was written in September 1946 by the officer commanding army intelligence for the city, Lt. Col. Philip Ramsbotham.<sup>80</sup> He stated that Hamburg was 'undoubtedly an unfortunate choice' as the designated headquarters of the zone, due to 'chronic overcrowding' in which 'some 30,000 persons are living in appalling conditions in cellars, bunkers and attics.'<sup>81</sup> There had been, he continued, a 'marked change from undoubted goodwill to open hostility', the 'feeling amongst the Hamburg population' was

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<sup>75</sup> FO 1030/306

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter*, p144

<sup>78</sup> FO 1032/1272, memo from Armytage to Robertson, 'Dangerous overcrowding at Hamburg', 24 July 1946, cited by Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg*, p166.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Philip Ramsbotham, (Lord Soulbury), educated at Eton and Magdalen College Cambridge, later a distinguished British diplomat and ambassador to the United States, 1974-1977.

<sup>81</sup> FO 1014/897, 'Brief for Deputy Regional Commissioner', 20 Sept. 1946, cited by Schildt, 'Das "Hamburg project"', p146

already intense and increasing, and 'the hostility of the Hamburg populace, half-starved and entering a second winter of "peace", may reach a dangerous level.' A further reason for cancelling the project, Ramsbotham argued, was that Hamburg was no longer the most suitable location for British headquarters. The recent decision to merge the British and US zones economically to form the 'Bizon', and the city's closeness to the Russian Zone, made it preferable to locate headquarters in a small town 'not yet openly hostile to Military Government,' in the southern part of the British Zone.<sup>82</sup>

Opposition to the scheme therefore reflected differences among the British in addition to tensions between British and Germans. Robertson, the original proponent of the plan, was concerned about the effectiveness of the central administration, whereas regional officials, such as Berry, Armytage and Ramsbotham, wished to maintain a harmonious relationship with the local German population. The main reason the project was abandoned, however, was that by the end of 1946 it had become redundant. A large central British headquarters was no longer required once the decisions had been taken, following the Paris Council of Foreign Ministers' meeting in the Spring of 1946, to merge the British with the US zone and reduce the total number of Control Commission staff. However, the project had acquired a momentum of its own, and criticism in Parliament and from the press in both Britain and Germany made it difficult to cancel, without damaging the prestige of Military Government.

Once the decision had been taken to abandon the project, Berry and his colleagues worked closely with the German administration to defuse the situation, save face and salvage something from the debacle. British staff were told in January 1947 that the project had not been abandoned, but temporarily suspended due to a shortage of building materials.<sup>83</sup> At a Regional Commissioners' conference attended by Robertson and Hynd, it was agreed that work should continue to complete the foundations of blocks of flats under construction.<sup>84</sup> Rather than taking the opportunity to criticise the British, the SPD government in Hamburg decided it was in their interest to help manage the presentation of the issue to the public.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. Ramsbotham's recommendation foreshadowed the decision two years later, in 1949, to locate the capital of the Federal Republic in Bonn, a small town at the southern edge of the British Zone.

<sup>83</sup> FO 1014/904, minutes of a meeting to discuss and 'examine the eventual implementation of the Hamburg Project', 3 Jan. 1947

<sup>84</sup> FO 1014/15, informal conference of Regional Commissioners with the Chancellor, 15 Jan. 1947

Brauer agreed with Berry that the project should be continued, but 'slowed down', on the grounds that:

A complete abandonment of the project after such great investments would justify any reproach by the public that the planning had lacked the necessary foresight. The point that much greater use could have been made of the material spend and the labour employed for the building and the repair of other flats in Hamburg could then not be countered effectively.

On the other hand ... after the present work has been completed to a certain extent, it should be slowed down. Thus the reproach would be avoided that for the continuation of the Project an incomparably great amount of material would be used in contrast to the civil housing programme.<sup>85</sup>

A few days later the issue was discussed at a joint meeting of British and German officials, chaired by Berry. Brauer reiterated his view that the British and German authorities were 'in the same boat' and if the project was abandoned, both would be blamed for spending money unnecessarily. However he added that the flats should not be completed before 1950 or possibly later.<sup>86</sup>

The project continued slowly. Both sides understood that the buildings would never be used to accommodate British personnel, although this was tacitly assumed, not stated explicitly. It had always been intended that the British 'enclave' would be handed back to the Germans after the occupation. On 10 March 1948 a meeting was held to discuss the 'final hand-over of the residue of the Hamburg project to the Germans'.<sup>87</sup> In February 1949 Robertson wrote to Berry, after learning that the German administration in Hamburg was going to resume work on the flats:

I am of course delighted to hear that the Hamburg project is to be restarted. I always held that the work which we did would be of benefit to the City and I am glad to see myself being justified.<sup>88</sup>

This comment reflected a sincere, if optimistic, belief that the occupation would ultimately benefit the Germans, despite the original plans for the Hamburg Project requiring the eviction of 50,000 Germans from their homes, with no alternative accommodation, in an already

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<sup>85</sup> FO 1014/890, letter from the *Bürgermeister* to the Regional Commissioner, 28 March 1947

<sup>86</sup> FO 1014/890, 'Minutes of a meeting of the Regional Commissioner's conference with the Burgomaster and members of the Building Administration', 1 April 1947

<sup>87</sup> FO 1014/890

<sup>88</sup> SHC, A/BCU8, Letter from Robertson to Berry, 18 Feb. 1949

overcrowded city. The *Grindelhochhäuser*,<sup>89</sup> as the blocks of flats originally designed to house British occupying forces were called, were completed in 1956. They were renovated between 1995 and 2006 and now stand under historic buildings protection.

#### 6.4 Personal reconciliation through Anglo-German discussion groups

*'Dem Gegner von gestern, dem Freunde von Morgen*

*Das ist das Ziel, dem wir nachstreben sollten.'*<sup>90</sup>

*('Yesterday's enemies, tomorrow's friends, that is the goal we should strive for.')*

In later life, Vaughan Berry liked to recall his discussions with German students from the University of Hamburg:

It is a matter of some pride to me that the present Chancellor, Helmuth [sic] Schmidt, was in my time one of about 15 students who used to come to our house regularly for informal discussion.<sup>91</sup>

Once power was devolved to local German administrations, the British authorities could no longer issue detailed instructions or tell the Germans what to do. They believed that their influence over the future development of the country was best maintained through personal relationships with Germans in responsible positions in government, business, the media and education.<sup>92</sup> Frances Rosenfeld has documented the many ways in which British occupation officials in Hamburg created a 'successful arena' for 'postwar reconciliation and cultural exchange' through promoting a network of interlocking Anglo-German clubs and associations, supported by officially sponsored reading rooms and information centres, known as *Die Brücke* (The Bridge).<sup>93</sup> Hamburg was not unique in this. Similar initiatives took place throughout the British Zone.

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<sup>89</sup> 'Grindel high-rise houses', after the name of the district in which they are situated.

<sup>90</sup> SHC, A/BCU7, speech at a reception on leaving Hamburg, undated, cited in Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg*, p414

<sup>91</sup> Private family archive, letter from Berry to his great-niece, Dec. 1975. See also BRO, Berry papers, telegram from Helmut Schmidt, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, to Lady Berry, 3 March 1979: 'It is with deep personal regret that I have learned about the death of Sir Henry I will always remember the interesting and inspiring hours I spent in Sir Henry's house in Hamburg Germany and I personally lost a friend.'

<sup>92</sup> FO 936/693, 'Relations between CCG Personnel and Germans'

<sup>93</sup> Frances Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter in Occupied Hamburg, 1945-50* (Unpublished PhD Diss, Columbia University, 2006)

The first Anglo-German discussion groups were formed on an entirely voluntary basis, outside their normal working hours, by individual Control Commission staff.<sup>94</sup> The idea was taken up, in slightly different ways, by Political Division and Education Branch. A proposal for an 'informal re-education scheme', modelled on the 'Education for Citizenship' activities developed by the British Army Bureau of Current Affairs, was approved in July 1946.<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile Education Branch promoted the idea of informal discussion groups, run voluntarily by enthusiastic individuals.<sup>96</sup> A branch memo in November 1946 suggested that Germans tended to view all official news sources with suspicion and would gain a better understanding of the 'British way and purpose' through personal contacts.<sup>97</sup> The idea was endorsed at a Regional Commissioners' conference in September 1946.<sup>98</sup> An article in the *British Zone Review* in January 1947 announced that the Commander-in-Chief had given formal approval for groups to be promoted and encouraged throughout the Zone, so that:

through personal contact and free discussion, the Germans will gain a fuller appreciation of the British way of thought, and conversely the British will reach a better understanding of the German mental outlook.<sup>99</sup>

Practical guidelines were offered on how to run the groups. A 'sufficiently keen and capable' British person should act as sponsor. Thirty should be the maximum number of participants; if there were more, it was difficult to hold a genuine discussion. Until the group had existed for some time, controversial subjects were best avoided, but topics should be of current interest, such as housing, food, education reform, films and music.<sup>100</sup> By 1948 several thousand groups had been formed in the Zone, including at least twenty-five established Anglo-German groups and sixteen other regular discussion groups in Hamburg.<sup>101</sup>

Other initiatives to promote mutual understanding and personal reconciliation were initiated at the highest levels of the Control Commission. In July 1946, soon after their appointment, Regional Commissioners were told that Robertson, the Deputy Military Governor, believed it desirable they should develop social contacts with 'German officials, political leaders, Trade

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<sup>94</sup> FO 1050/1312, 'Anglo-German Discussion Groups', cited in Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter*, pp215-219

<sup>95</sup> FO 1050/1290, 'Education for Citizenship', cited in Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter*, p236

<sup>96</sup> Robert Birley, 'Education for Democracy', *British Zone Review*, Vol.2, No.4, 27 Sept. 1947, cited in Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter*, pp220-230

<sup>97</sup> FO 1050/1312, Memo by M.M. Simons, cited in Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter*, p215. The 'British Way and Purpose' was the title of a series of booklets produced during the war by the Directorate of Army Education.

<sup>98</sup> FO 1005/1354, Minutes of the 3rd Regional Commissioners' conference, 11 Sept. 1946

<sup>99</sup> *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.34, 4 Jan. 1947, p16

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>101</sup> Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter*, p245

Union leaders and so on', as 'many things can more suitably be discussed unofficially at a cocktail party or a dinner party than officially in an office.'<sup>102</sup> In May 1947 most of the restrictions on personal and social contacts between British and Germans were lifted in a new 'Special Order', the preamble to which stated that 'British policy aims at encouraging the democratic way of life among the Germans'.<sup>103</sup> Control Commission staff were encouraged to visit German families (but not to 'spend the night with them') and to entertain Germans 'both officially and as private individuals.'<sup>104</sup> A year later the regulations were revised again, at the instigation of the Minister for Germany, Frank Pakenham, to state that British personnel should 'behave towards the Germans as the people of one Christian and civilized race towards another, whose interests in many ways converge with our own and for whom we have no longer any ill-will.'<sup>105</sup>

Over time, some informal discussion groups developed into social and cultural clubs and societies and were complemented by other activities designed to promote mutual understanding, such as exchange visits between Britain and Germany. As Regional Commissioner, Berry provided official endorsement and gave his personal support to some of the most high profile activities, such as the Hamburg International Club, for young men and women aged between 18 and 30, and the elite Hamburg Anglo-German Club. At the inaugural meeting of the International Club, Berry spoke of a need for mutual tolerance and understanding. The club's German members, he said, had 'a difficult past to face.' Although many were only children at the time, they had to face the fact that:

The Nazi Government, which was enthusiastically supported by large masses of the German people, committed unspeakable crimes against humanity, and you must not expect that these things can be quickly or easily forgotten, especially by your Eastern neighbours.<sup>106</sup>

British members, on the other hand, should 'not be too critical of those Germans who spent their childhood under the Nazi regime.'<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> FO 1030/172, letter from General Philip Balfour to Regional Commissioners, 18 July 1946, cited in Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg*, p361

<sup>103</sup> FO 936/693, 'Special Routine Order' No. 263, 'Relations between C.C.G. Personnel and Germans', 30 May 1947

<sup>104</sup> Ibid

<sup>105</sup> FO 936/693, draft order submitted to the 16<sup>th</sup> Regional Commissioners' conference, 18 May 1948

<sup>106</sup> SHC, A/BCU7, speech to the Hamburg International Club, cited in Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter*, p267 and Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg*, p377

<sup>107</sup> Ibid

Whereas the International Club was for young people, the Hamburg Anglo-German Club, deliberately modelled on a traditional English gentlemen's club, was designed to cater for the city's elite. Founder-members included Berry, Brauer and some of the city's leading politicians and businessmen.<sup>108</sup> After the currency reform in June 1948, Berry complained that British officials could no longer afford the costs of returning hospitality offered to them by 'affluent Germans' in the club. This, he believed, was unfortunate as it was in clubs such as these, 'that we can reach the ruling 5 per cent of the population.'<sup>109</sup> The Hamburg Anglo-German Club survived proposals to close in 1951 and still exists in 2013.<sup>110</sup>

From 1947 the British made a deliberate effort, in Berry's words, 'to impress our ideas on the small elite of the population who lead in administration, industry, education and arts, journalism and so forth,'<sup>111</sup> but this did not extend to courting popularity among the German population as a whole. As an unelected military government, imposed on a defeated nation by force, there was no obvious need to do so. Berry wrote in February 1948 that the 'occupation is not exactly popular and we make little effort to win the support of the German people.'<sup>112</sup> A few months later, he warned that although the air-lift had resulted in a more favourable attitude towards the Western Allies in Berlin, in the British Zone the occupation was:

intensely disliked and we must not be misled by the excellent relations which exist between the Administrations on both sides. It is not so much that we ourselves are becoming more unpopular as that the Germans are finding their feet.<sup>113</sup>

He asked his staff to investigate further. They reported that the British were disliked for their alleged aim of exploiting Germany, 'muddlesome inefficiency', and because the Germans held them responsible if anything went wrong. There was 'admiration for individual British integrity' but 'very little for our administrative ability'. 'British psychology in official relations with the Germans' was considered poor and 'The only virtue seen in the British occupation is that it keeps the Russians out.'<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg*, pp420-422; Arnold Sywottek, 'Verständigung mit den "Engländern"', p154

<sup>109</sup> SHC, A/BCU8, Monthly Report for Dec. 1948

<sup>110</sup> Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg*, p426

<sup>111</sup> SHC, A/BCU8, Monthly Report for March 1947

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, Monthly Report for Feb. 1948

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, Monthly Report for Aug. 1948

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, Monthly Report for Oct. 1948



Despite concerns over the unpopularity of the occupation, Berry's later reports show satisfaction with progress. In March 1948 he attached a declaration from the city government welcoming the Marshall Plan. This showed, he commented, that 'the right spirit rules in the Senate of Hamburg'.<sup>115</sup> In June, as the availability of food improved for the first time since the end of the war, he reported that, 'For the first time in Occupation history food has not been the most absorbing topic'.<sup>116</sup> The following month, as tensions over Berlin eased, and fears lessened that the Western Allies would give way to Soviet pressure and evacuate the city, he reported that, for the first time in the occupation, 'the majority of Hamburgers are openly and vigourously [sic] championing Western democracy against Russian totalitarianism'.<sup>117</sup> The economic transformation following currency reform had been 'quite remarkable' and the city's finances were much improved.<sup>118</sup> In his last report as Commissioner, for April 1949, he could state that, following the signing of the Atlantic Pact, agreement on the Basic Law, and concessions on shipbuilding and dismantling, 'a spirit of optimism prevails at the moment among all responsible elements and general morale has probably never been higher since the Occupation began'.<sup>119</sup>

By the time Berry left Hamburg in May 1949, to take up a position as the British representative on the International Authority of the Ruhr, his aim of establishing a good working relationship with the city's German administration had been achieved. In a study completed in 1974, Hilary Balshaw conducted interviews with a number of Hamburg senators, all of whom spoke of the 'respect and admiration' he inspired in them and praised him in exceptional terms as, for example, 'a most marvellous man'.<sup>120</sup> In January 1949, Robertson provided further endorsement of the strength of his relationship with his German colleagues by telling Berry that he had recently asked the heads of government of the four *Länder* in the British Zone for their views on the current state of Anglo-German relations. Brauer had replied that:

Relations between the Germans and the British and between the City Administration and the British occupation authorities can properly be described as ideal. That is largely due to your Regional Commissioner. There are of course difficulties from time to time but we

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, Monthly Report for March 1948

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, Monthly Report for June 1948

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, Monthly Report for July 1948

<sup>118</sup> Ibid

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, Monthly Report for April 1949

<sup>120</sup> 'ein grossartiger Mann', Balshaw, *The British occupation of Germany*, p243

always manage to straighten them out. In my view the difficulties are not greater and probably less, than they would be if we had a German garrison in the town.<sup>121</sup>

Berry was able to look back on his achievements in Hamburg with satisfaction. In a speech during a celebratory return visit in 1959, he attributed much of his reputed success, and that of the City of Hamburg, which now 'formed part of the German miracle', to the 'far-sighted and humane policy of the Western Allies,' adding that he retained his admiration for men such as General Robertson and Robert Birley, who had directed British policy in the Zone.<sup>122</sup>

## 6.5 Conclusion

Recent historians of the occupation in Hamburg<sup>123</sup> have not agreed with the self-congratulatory view, expressed by Berry and many of his former colleagues in the 1950s and 1960s, that far-sighted and humane British policies contributed to the political and economic success of a democratic West Germany. Their criticisms of British occupation policy, however, should be placed in the context of what Berry and his colleagues aimed to achieve. Berry's primary concern was the future welfare of the British people, not the social, political or economic organisation of Germany. His principal aim, shared by all the British individuals examined in this study, was simple and uncontroversial: to create a peaceful and democratic Germany that would never again threaten the national interests of Great Britain. He believed that this aim could best be achieved by representing the interests of the city, defusing conflicts, establishing a good working relationship with the German SPD administration and promoting mutual reconciliation as a means of preserving British influence among the German governing elite.

Axel Schildt has argued that it is an oversimplification to see the occupation from 1945-49 as harmonious throughout. Growing trust was paralleled with tense conflicts, of which the Hamburg Project was one.<sup>124</sup> Similarly, Arnold Sywottek has highlighted German opposition to British Military Government, as well as initiatives by both sides to promote mutual

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<sup>121</sup> SHC, A/BCU8, letter from Robertson to Berry, 18 Feb. 1949

<sup>122</sup> SHC, A/BCU11

<sup>123</sup> Schildt, 'Das "Hamburg project"', Sywottek, 'Verständigung mit den "Engländern"', Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg*, Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter*

<sup>124</sup> Schildt, 'Das "Hamburg project"', p131

understanding.<sup>125</sup> These comments are valid in correcting an overly rose-tinted view of growing trust and uninterrupted harmony but, in Hamburg, unrest was successfully defused and had little impact on the ability of the British to achieve their primary aims.

In the conclusions to his thorough and wide-ranging study of *Die Briten in Hamburg*, Michael Ahrens argued that the occupation was over-complicated and badly planned. The cost was too high, the British and Germans lived in 'parallel worlds', there was a 'deep division' between the civilian and military arms of the occupation, and no single point of contact for German authorities to deal with.<sup>126</sup> These criticisms are valid from a German perspective. They describe various ways in which the occupation made life more difficult for Germans in Hamburg, and they question the extent to which the British goal of mutual reconciliation was achieved. The Germans paid the occupation costs, resented the privileges assumed by the occupiers, such as travel in reserved compartments on over-crowded trains, and were annoyed by sometimes having to deal separately with British civilian and military authorities. None of these issues, however, significantly hindered British achievement of their primary aim of creating a peaceful and democratic Germany.

Frances Rosenfeld considered that the encounter between British and Germans in Hamburg was a 'unique experiment in postwar reconciliation and intercultural understanding' of which both sides were proud at the time, but which was achieved at the cost of ignoring difficult situations and topics: the German Nazi past, the British colonial legacy of separation from the natives and the Allied fire-bombings of the city.<sup>127</sup> The Hamburg bourgeoisie claimed, incorrectly, that they had opposed the Nazis during the war. They looked back to the city's pre-1933 liberal and cosmopolitan traditions and in so doing reasserted their own social, economic and political pre-eminence in the city. British policy on the other hand, Rosenfeld claimed, was unduly influenced by an outmoded colonial model and 'reflected the essentially conservative values and self-image of the Foreign Office establishment, by projecting a generally old-fashioned, rose-tinted, middle and upper class view of British life.'<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Sywottek, 'Verständigung mit den "Engländern"', pp150-151

<sup>126</sup> Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg*, pp446-447

<sup>127</sup> Rosenfeld, *The Anglo-German Encounter*, p346, p353

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, pp347-8

This study supports Rosenfeld's view that part of the price paid for mutual reconciliation was that difficult but important issues were avoided and rarely discussed, such as the city's Nazi past and, on the British side, the wartime bombing. These issues remained unresolved and re-emerged in later years as a source of conflict between British and Germans and in public debates within Germany. Her claim that British policy was unduly influenced by an outmoded colonial model, however, was a generalisation that was true of many members of the occupation but not of Berry. As discussed previously, there were strong 'echoes of empire' in British occupation policy as formulated by men such as the former colonial official, Harold Ingrams, Field-Marshal Montgomery and Generals Robertson and Bishop. Although Berry was of similar age and could be considered part of the same 'generation', his personal experience of Empire was negative. Berry's life history was an illustration of an alternative grand narrative, also highlighted by Rosenfeld, of Britain as a great power in Europe.<sup>129</sup> He studied French and German at university, spoke both languages fluently, fought in the First World War, served in the occupied Rhineland and worked in the City of London, then, as now, the leading financial centre in Europe. His role as the representative of British interests in occupied Germany was a natural extension of his earlier career and of British attempts to maintain a pre-eminent role in post-war Europe.

Berry did not act as the representative of a power in decline. He was supremely confident in his own values, ability and judgement, based on his personal experience and the conclusions he had reached from his work in politics and business between the wars. He understood and respected local traditions and never treated Germany as a colony. He did not share the wartime 'Vansittartist' prejudices of some of his Labour Party colleagues against the German Social Democrats and accepted without question that they represented a progressive movement with similar ideals to his own. He represented the interests of his city to the central British authorities, but he was willing to reprimand and overrule the local German government if he considered this necessary. His experiences in the Rhineland from 1919-1925 were more important than the emerging Cold War in influencing his policy and attitudes. Over time, they reinforced each other and the conclusion he could draw from both

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid, p18

was that he and his British colleagues had a vital role in actively supporting and encouraging democratic forces within Germany.

Did he achieve his aims, and can the British occupation of Hamburg be considered a model for a benevolent occupation under favourable circumstances? As recent historians have shown, there were periods of tense conflict between occupiers and occupied, some actions of the British were unnecessarily high-handed and antagonised the local population and some difficult issues were ignored. There is little evidence of any long-term British influence on the city arising from the occupation, apart from the continued existence of a few blocks of flats and the Anglo-German club. On the other hand, Berry established excellent relations with the German administration on a basis of mutual trust. He maintained British control in those areas he considered important but did not interfere unnecessarily. He kept the peace but tolerated dissent, provided a channel for the discussion of grievances and defused difficult situations. He oversaw the transfer of power from direct British rule to an independent German administration. He did what he could to promote economic reconstruction, political renewal and personal reconciliation in the city, with results that have generally stood the test of time. Overall, despite criticisms from recent historians, this offers a reasonable model for the benign occupation of a defeated enemy.

### **Part III**

#### **Personal reconciliation:**

**Four young officers with no adult experience but war**

## **7 John Chaloner, Michael Howard, Michael Palliser and Jan Thexton: Changing aims and personal relationships: May 1945 – May 1948**

*'And I want to get to know the people here, and I can assure you that I wouldn't learn much if all I did was to listen to the rot that is talked in the Mess.'*<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, the activities of four young officers responsible for the implementation of British policy are examined, to discover whether they shared the aims of the senior officers and civilian diplomats and administrators at the top of Military Government, and to explore how personal relations between British and Germans changed over the course of the occupation. To compensate for any bias in the source materials, which were inevitably more personal than those used in previous chapters, and to help assess how representative this small group of four individuals was of the views and actions of other young officers in occupied Germany, this chapter also draws on a selection of interviews from the Imperial War Museum (IWM) Sound Archive with twenty young British men and one woman, who were born between 1913 and 1926 and worked for Military Government or the Control Commission.<sup>2</sup>

The family backgrounds of all four young officers were typical of the British professional and middle classes and similar to those of the senior officers, diplomats and administrators discussed in previous chapters. Though clearly less influential than the Military Governors, army generals and senior civilian administrators, they all held responsible positions and could be considered part of a 'governing elite' of British officers and administrators in occupied Germany. Two of the young officers had considerable freedom to act on their own initiative and were influential in their own right. John Chaloner was Press Officer in Hanover, where he created the news magazine *Der Spiegel*. Michael Howard was Intelligence Officer for T-Force, the unit within the British Army responsible for 'evacuating' German equipment,

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Howard, *Otherwise Occupied: Letters home from the ruins of Nazi Germany* (Tiverton, Devon: Old Street Publishing, 2010), p147

<sup>2</sup> The selection comprised all interviews held in the archive with those who met the age criteria and worked for the Military Government or Control Commission between 1945 and 1948, with a few minor exceptions. All interviews were undertaken by trained IWM staff following a consistent style. Selection criteria and methodological issues arising from the use of this particular source are discussed in Appendix A. A table showing which of the selected IWM interviews include references to the themes considered in this study, together with brief details of the personal backgrounds and roles in Germany of the interviewees, is provided in Appendix B.

research laboratories, scientists and technicians to assist British economic recovery after the war. The other two young officers worked in more routine positions. Michael Palliser<sup>3</sup> was a tank commander during the war and remained in Germany as part of the army of occupation until he was demobilised in January 1947. Jan Thexton served during the war as a non-commissioned signals officer and joined the Control Commission for Germany after he was demobilised, working initially in Reparations Division in charge of a team of 45 German staff, and subsequently in the Mandatory Requirements Office, where he was responsible for procuring items for the occupation forces from the German economy. He met and married his wife in Germany.

Oral history interviews I undertook with Palliser and Thexton<sup>4</sup> and personal accounts by Howard and Chaloner<sup>5</sup> were cross referenced with documentary evidence, if available, and the twenty-one IWM interviews, to identify significant differences or variations and to ensure that research findings were reasonably representative of the 'younger generation' of British officers and NCOs in post-war Germany. The IWM interviewees<sup>6</sup> include some who were a little older than the four 'protagonists' and some from less established or affluent family backgrounds. They also cover a greater diversity of roles, including intelligence, denazification, the care of Displaced Persons, the Judge Advocate General's department responsible for prosecuting war crimes, RAF ground crew, two naval officers on minesweeping and customs and excise patrols, two volunteers working for Friends' Ambulance and Salvation Army units and a Russian interpreter.

The first theme examined in this chapter is the response of the 'younger generation' of officers and NCOs to the end of the war and the situation in occupied Germany: what they aimed to achieve before demobilisation and returning home and how their aims differed from those of their senior officers. With some exceptions, they did not respond in the same way to

<sup>3</sup> Appointed KCMG 1973 and GCMG 1977

<sup>4</sup> The two interviews I undertook with Palliser and Thexton have been lodged with the IWM Sound Archive (henceforward IWM SA) accession numbers 32236/4 (Michael Palliser) and 30895 (J.M.G. Thexton)

<sup>5</sup> Michael Howard was interviewed for the IWM Sound Archive in 2008; occasional reference is made to this interview, but the main source used for his story is his published memoir *Otherwise Occupied, Letters home from the ruins of Nazi Germany* (Tiverton, Devon: Old Street Publishing, 2010). John Chaloner was interviewed by *Der Spiegel* in 2003 and 2006, shortly before he died in 2007. I have consulted the tapes and transcripts of these interviews, but the main sources used in his case were a history of the founding of *Der Spiegel* by Leo Brawand, *Der Spiegel - ein Besatzungskind: Wie die Pressefreiheit nach Deutschland kam* (Hamburg: EVA Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), documents in The National Archives and the private business archive of *Der Spiegel* in Hamburg, and some personal memories provided by his sister as written answers to questions.

<sup>6</sup> In this chapter 'IWM interviewees' refers to the twenty-one interviews selected from the IWM Sound Archive, (i.e. excluding Howard, Palliser and Thexton).



the death and destruction they saw around them. They did not share Montgomery's, Robertson's or Bishop's ideological concerns about the spread of disease and communism or believe there was a religious or spiritual need to 'save the soul of Germany'. They were too young to have been politically active before the war or to have voted in a British General Election. Unlike Ingrams, Albu, Flanders or Berry, they were not inspired by attempts to convert the Germans to the British democratic 'way of life', or change the political and social structure of Germany. Personal goals were generally more important than collective national aims.

Two case studies, Michael Howard's experience as Intelligence Officer for T-Force and John Chaloner's creation the news magazine *Der Spiegel*, illustrate how some exceptional individuals combined personal ambition with an idealistic desire to make a significant contribution to the aims of the occupation, as they understood them. Both Howard and Chaloner encountered resistance from higher authorities as British policy changed, in 1946 and 1947, from direct control of the German economy to emphasise the need for reconstruction and to devolve more power and responsibility to the Germans.

A second theme, illustrated by the personal experiences of all four young officers and many IWM interviewees, is that of reconciliation with the former enemy.<sup>7</sup> Personal relationships with German civilians were widespread among junior officers and other ranks in the British army and Control Commission, especially those whose work brought them into regular contact with the local population. Some made friendships that lasted long after the occupation and around ten thousand British men, including Jan Thexton, met their future wives in Germany. The British occupiers came to see Germans as individuals, rather than as reflections of the collective images promoted in wartime, but this did not happen automatically and required a conscious effort on both sides.

Many of the British occupiers started to see their role in Germany as protecting 'their' Germans from a threat from Soviet Russia. This change to a Cold War mentality is not easy to explain, as it developed soon after the end of the war and appeared to pre-date any general awareness of international tensions between the four wartime allies at inter-

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<sup>7</sup> 17/21 IWM interviews included references to personal relations with Germans.

governmental level, in the Council of Foreign Ministers or the Allied Control Council. This change in attitude was due, at least in part, to a perception that despite the differences, they had more in common with their former enemies, the Germans they met and worked with on a daily basis, than with their former allies, Russian soldiers and Eastern European Displaced Persons, whom they also encountered in Germany but met less frequently and nearly always in negative circumstances of confrontation or disagreement. Reconciliation between British and Germans was possible because their personal experiences during the occupation reinforced the similarities, rather than the differences, between them.<sup>8</sup>

## 7.1 Personal backgrounds and positions in Germany

### John Chaloner



John Chaloner in 1947<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, gender and foreign relations 1945-49* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), has argued that a similar dynamic applied in the US Zone, emphasising the gendered aspect of the encounter and the 'feminisation' of Germany by American GIs. This thesis tends to support Goedde's conclusion (p205) that the Cold War was as much a consequence as a cause of improved personal relationships with the Germans, although the British experience was not identical to that of the US. References by senior British officials, such as General Robertson, to Germans as children in need of education, are reminiscent of imperial 'paternalism' and a process of 'infantilisation', rather than 'feminisation'.

<sup>9</sup> Photograph from *Der Spiegel* archive (henceforward DSA)

John Chaloner was born on 5 November 1924.<sup>10</sup> Both his parents were journalists and writers.<sup>11</sup> His mother was the daughter of Sir Gilbert Barling, a distinguished surgeon and Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham University.<sup>12</sup> She attended a girls' boarding school before studying music for three years in Germany, returning to England, a short-lived marriage, separation and divorce. During the First World War she worked as a secret agent and uncovered a German spy who was sabotaging production in a factory. She was promoted to the rank of Captain and awarded an MBE for her efforts. She was disowned by her father after her divorce, but eventually reconciled after she married a second time and had four children, of whom John was the eldest.<sup>13</sup>

Chaloner's parents held liberal and progressive views. When he was ten years old they sent him to the Beltane School in Wimbledon, where many of the other pupils were the children of German Jewish immigrants.<sup>14</sup> The co-director of the school, Ernst Bulova, had formerly been the principal of the Montessori Dahlem School in Berlin, before he was arrested by the Gestapo in 1933 on account of his left-wing political activities and fled to Britain.<sup>15</sup> Chaloner left school aged 15 and worked as assistant editor on the *Boys Own Paper* and later on a magazine for Officer Cadets. He volunteered to join the army as a private, was soon promoted to sergeant and identified as a potential officer. He was accepted at Sandhurst and commissioned as an officer in the Westminster Dragoons.<sup>16</sup> He took part in the invasion of Normandy and subsequent battles in France, the Netherlands and Germany as commander of a Sherman flail tank. On one occasion his tank was destroyed by enemy fire and, though he survived unharmed, one of his crew was killed.<sup>17</sup> At the end of the war, by now promoted to captain, he heard there were opportunities for officers with experience of publishing to join PR/ISC, the Public Relations and Information Services Control division of the British Military

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<sup>10</sup> John Chaloner Obituary, *The Times*, 16 Feb. 2007

<sup>11</sup> Information provided by Joan Woodward, John Chaloner's sister, as written answers to questions, 10 April 2010

<sup>12</sup> L.G. Parsons, 'Barling, Sir (Harry) Gilbert, baronet (1855-1940)', rev. Jeffrey S. Reznick, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/catalogue/urls.lon.ac.uk/view/article/30593>, accessed 13 May 2010]

<sup>13</sup> Woodward, written answers to questions

<sup>14</sup> Hildegard Feidel-Mertz, 'Integration and Formation of Identity: Exile Schools in Great Britain', *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol.23, No.1, (2004), pp71-84

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Martin, 'Ernst Bulova, 98, Founder of Camp with a Free Spirit' *The New York Times*, 28 Jan. 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Woodward, written answers to questions

<sup>17</sup> Leo Brawand, *Der Spiegel - ein Besatzungsland: Wie die Pressefreiheit nach Deutschland kam* (Hamburg: EVA Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), p14

Government. As he could speak German, though not fluently, and saw this as an alternative to a possible posting to the Far East, he applied and was accepted.<sup>18</sup>

As press officer in Hanover, Chaloner was responsible for re-establishing German newspapers, initially under direct Military Government control and subsequently licensed to suitable German individuals. He established newspapers in Lüneburg, Osnabrück and Hanover, before creating a new magazine, *Der Spiegel*.<sup>19</sup> After returning to Britain in early 1947 he formed a company, Seymour Press, which became one of the largest distributors of foreign publications in the UK. He also published six novels and wrote and illustrated a series of books for children. In later life he bought and ran a dairy farm in Sussex, started a vineyard, acted as publishing adviser to the Institute of Directors and Confederation of British Industry on their in-house journals and wrote numerous letters to *The Times*. He died in 2007, aged 82.<sup>20</sup>

### **Michael Howard**



Michael Howard in 1947<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pp27-28

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p53

<sup>20</sup> John Chaloner Obituary, *The Times*, 16 Feb. 2007

<sup>21</sup> Photograph from Howard, *Otherwise Occupied*

Michael Howard was the youngest of the four young officers discussed in this chapter. He was born in May 1926, in Fiji, where his father was a Colonial Administrator. He left Fiji when he was eight years old to attend boarding school in England. At the outbreak of war in 1939 he was at school at Rugby,<sup>22</sup> where he was a keen sportsman and athlete. He volunteered to join the forces as soon as he could, on his seventeenth birthday in May 1943, but was not called up for another fifteen months, too late to see active service. Meanwhile he joined the Home Guard and Junior Training Corps at school. He was commissioned as an officer in the Rifle Brigade in August 1945, three months after the end of the war in Europe.<sup>23</sup>

Rather than joining the First or Second Battalions of the Rifle Brigade, he was sent to a holding unit, in Osnabrück in North West Germany. In a conversation with John Kirby, another newly commissioned officer, whose father was Deputy Chief of Staff for the Control Commission, he learned about a new unit, supposedly engaged in secret and interesting work.<sup>24</sup> T-Force had been established a year earlier, to examine and secure factories and research laboratories, by-passed by the front-line troops as they advanced. Their job was to investigate these facilities, guard them to prevent looting and damage to potentially valuable equipment and secure and preserve documents. After the end of the war their role broadened to provide a base for the teams of scientists and businessmen sent to Germany by BIOS, the British Intelligence Objectives Sub-Committee, to investigate German scientific and technical capabilities and 'evacuate' reparations material, including documents and blueprints, machinery and equipment, and key scientists and technicians, to Britain.<sup>25</sup>

Howard had been offered a place at Cambridge University and hoped for as short a stay in the army as possible. However, he became absorbed in his work, rapidly received promotion from 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant to Captain and stayed until he was demobilised in December 1947, by which time the work of T-Force was largely complete and the unit was being wound down. He went up to Cambridge in January 1948. After completing the shortened two year degree course usual at the time, he was selected from 200 Oxbridge graduates to work in the London office of W.R. Grace, a large US-based, international manufacturing and trading

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<sup>22</sup> One of the most prestigious British public schools

<sup>23</sup> IWM SA, interview with Michael Howard, accession no. 31405

<sup>24</sup> Ibid; Howard, *Otherwise Occupied*, pp22-3

<sup>25</sup> Sean Longden, *T-Force: the Race for Nazi War Secrets, 1945* (London: Constable, 2009)

company, and subsequently followed a career in business.<sup>26</sup> He published his memoir of life in occupied Germany in 2010.

### **Michael Palliser**



Michael Palliser, by Elliott & Fry, 1942 © National Portrait Gallery

Michael Palliser was born in 1922 to a family with significant naval connections on both sides. His father, Admiral Sir Arthur Palliser, joined the Royal Navy as a young man in 1907, rose to command first a destroyer then a battleship and, from 1938-1940, was captain of the gunnery school *HMS Excellent* at Whale Island near Portsmouth. At the end of the Second World War, he was Fourth Sea Lord at the Admiralty and finished his naval career as Commander-in-Chief, East Indies. Michael Palliser's mother was the daughter of a distinguished naval engineer, who had been in charge of naval dockyards at Simon's Town in South Africa and Cockatoo Island, Sydney, Australia.<sup>27</sup>

Because his parents were often overseas, Palliser spent most of his childhood with his grandparents. He learnt to speak French fluently at an early age, as the only way to talk to the family's French cook and housemaid. While still a young child, he travelled widely in Europe. His mother's brother, a soldier in the army, took him and his grandmother on a

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<sup>26</sup> IWM SA, Howard

<sup>27</sup> IWM SA, interview with Michael Palliser undertaken for this thesis, accession no. 32236/4

series of holiday trips across Germany to Berlin, where he remembered seeing riots in the streets, to Danzig and East Prussia, Prague, Vienna and Italy. He suspected later that his uncle was engaged in military intelligence gathering and he and his grandmother acted as cover for him.<sup>28</sup>

He went to school at Wellington College,<sup>29</sup> finishing in the summer of 1939. He remembered spending most of July that year digging air raid shelters at school. At Oxford he read classics for a little over a year, before joining the Coldstream Guards. After initial training and six months at Sandhurst, he was commissioned as an officer in an armoured tank battalion. He spent a further two years with the regiment in England preparing for the invasion of Normandy and landed in France two weeks after D-Day. He fought with the army through France, Belgium and Holland, across the Rhine to Germany, and on VE Day had reached Neumünster, a small town in Schleswig Holstein, north of Hamburg.<sup>30</sup>

After the end of the war, he stayed in Germany for eighteen months, before his demobilisation in January 1947, stationed mainly in Berlin and later in Bad Godesberg, near Bonn. Despite claiming that his unit was 'pretty parochial' and had little contact with Germans, he could still recall, in considerable detail, many circumstances and events which made an impression on him, including being placed in charge of the administration of a German village for two weeks shortly after VE Day, attending a performance by the Red Army Choir in Berlin, a long train journey through the Ruhr in a *Wagons-Lit* sleeping car, seeing large numbers of Displaced Persons and 'the constant movement of people', and conversations with a widowed German countess and her sister, who lived in a large house in Bad Godesberg which had been requisitioned for his officers' mess.<sup>31</sup>

After leaving Germany in 1947 he had a distinguished career in the Foreign Office and played a significant role in British applications to join the European Community under both Labour and Conservative governments. In 1948 he married the daughter of Paul-Henri Spaak, Prime Minister of Belgium and later Secretary General of NATO. After various diplomatic postings, he was appointed private secretary to the Prime Minister Harold Wilson

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> A leading British public school, with a reputation for preparing pupils to follow a career as officers in the army

<sup>30</sup> IWM SA, Palliser

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

in 1966, Minister at the British Embassy in Paris in 1969, head of the UK delegation to the European Community in Brussels in 1971 and, following British accession, UK ambassador and permanent representative to the European Communities in 1973. Two years later he was appointed Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Head of the Diplomatic Service.<sup>32</sup> He died on 19 June 2012.

### **Jan Thexton**

Jan Thexton was born in April 1920 in Plymouth. His father was a non-commissioned officer in the army and he spent his early childhood in Bermuda, where his father was Garrison Chief Clerk to the Governor, responsible for much of the administration of the British base. He returned to the UK in the late 1920s, when his father was offered a position in the Military Secretary's branch of the War Office. After leaving school, he worked in an accountant's office, joined the Middlesex Yeomanry as a territorial and was called up shortly before the start of hostilities in 1939, to help prepare for mobilisation. He was posted to a signals unit in an armoured tank division and fought for two years in North Africa, where he took part in the decisive battles of El Alamein and Medenine. He returned to England to prepare for the invasion of Normandy, landing on D-Day plus one, and fought with the army through France, Belgium and Holland into Germany. At the end of the war he was in Hanover. His rank at the time was sergeant. He said later that he and several others in his unit were offered commissions but declined, because everyone who accepted was sent to the Far East, to fight against the Japanese.<sup>33</sup>

After twelve months with the army in Germany, he decided to stay in Germany and join the civilian Control Commission.<sup>34</sup> Though officially designated as civil servants, Control Commission staff were offered temporary contracts, with no security of employment. He entered a competition for entry into the permanent civil service, was successful and stayed in Germany for over twenty years. His first position was in the disarmament and reparations branch of the Control Commission, where he was responsible, with a team of 45 German staff, for compiling lists of armaments plants and equipment to be made available as

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<sup>32</sup> *Who's Who 1983* (London: A C Black, 1983), p1709; *People of Today* (London: Debrett's, 1997), pp1473-4

<sup>33</sup> IWM SA, interview with J.M.G. Thexton undertaken for this thesis, accession no. 30895

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*



reparations for the British and other Western allies. He then moved to the Mandatory Requirements office, where he was responsible for purchasing equipment and supplies for the British, Belgian, Norwegian and Canadian occupation forces. He met his wife in Germany soon after the end of the war, when he was working on restoring the German telephone system and she was a supervisor in the Hanover telephone exchange, though they were not able to marry until June 1947.<sup>35</sup>

He started to learn German before the war and did what he could to improve his ability to speak the language. He was proud of this and considered it did much to further his career. After German rearmament in the 1950s, he was a liaison officer at the British Embassy, where, in contrast to his earlier work on disarmament and reparations, his job was to try to persuade the newly formed German armed forces to buy British equipment. He became close friends with General Albert Schnez, later appointed *Inspekteur des Heeres*, the most senior position in the West German army. He was godfather to one of Schnez's sons and the two families stayed in touch for the rest of their lives, regularly exchanging letters and phone calls and visiting each other when they travelled to Britain or Germany. He and his wife had no children and he said later that this family relationship was the closest they came to having their own children. After leaving Germany and returning to the UK, he continued to work as a civil servant at the Ministry of Defence in London, ending his career as director of a branch helping to promote British arms exports to Europe, Turkey, Iran, Israel and Pakistan. He died on 14 June 2008.<sup>36</sup>

## 7.2 Personal fulfilment rather than collective goals

*'I just didn't really know what to do. I was far too old to start again for accountancy or anything like that. I had no other qualifications apart from my basic educational qualifications. I was no good to anybody really.'*<sup>37</sup>

The four young officers and twenty-one IWM interviewees discussed in this chapter were generally practical, realistic and conscientious. None recalled hearing or reading the

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

exhortations from Montgomery, Robertson or other senior officers to 'save the soul of Germany' or 'rebuild civilisation' let alone being influenced or inspired by these. Similarly, no-one mentioned reading articles in the *British Zone Review*, Montgomery's proclamations to the German people or his or Robertson's talks on the British Forces Network radio broadcasts.<sup>38</sup>

Most were in Germany when the fighting stopped and had to stay while awaiting demobilisation or, as in the case of two interpreters, were posted there when the war was over. Some were filling in time before they could progress to their chosen career, such as one IWM interviewee who wanted to train as a teacher, but was faced with a two year waiting list before he could take up his college place.<sup>39</sup> Two naval officers were reluctant to return to civilian life after six or seven years at sea.<sup>40</sup> The only IWM interviewee who appeared to have applied for his position for idealistic reasons was a conscientious objector, who had a strong commitment to voluntary work and community service.<sup>41</sup>

Some took their work very seriously, including all four of the young officers considered in detail. Jan Thexton spoke of working long hours when he was compiling lists of war plants and machinery available for reparations. He was in the office from 8am until 8 or 9pm. Sometimes he was travelling and did not return home for days at a time.<sup>42</sup> Others, however, treated their work more casually. For some in the army of occupation or the air force in Berlin, the end of the war meant a return to peace-time soldiering, but in a foreign country. One IWM interviewee spoke of 'going back to polishing things again'.<sup>43</sup> Another could not remember what he did in Germany, referring to 'staff duties' or 'something like that'.<sup>44</sup> One had 'a jolly twelve months' in a jazz band at HQ British Air Forces of Occupation at Bückeburg from Sept 1945 - Sept 1946, playing there or at nearby locations most nights in the week. He had a 'sainted life', he said, and could do more or less as he liked. They were

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<sup>38</sup> Only one IWM interviewee mentioned Montgomery and this was in relation to the war in North Africa, not Germany. He said that when Montgomery arrived the whole atmosphere changed, adding 'incredible man.' (IWM SA, Bernard Garrood)

<sup>39</sup> IWM SA, Eric Gregg-Rowbury

<sup>40</sup> IWM SA, George Philip Henry James, Kenneth Taylor

<sup>41</sup> IWM SA, Richard Harland

<sup>42</sup> IWM SA, Thexton

<sup>43</sup> IWM SA, Ronald Mallabar

<sup>44</sup> IWM SA, Garrood

just waiting for demobilisation but 'it was a lovely way to do this ... It was just one big ball actually while we were there.'<sup>45</sup>

Most knew little about other divisions or how their actions related to the overall aims of the occupation. They had no doubts that the war had been just and necessary but, unlike their senior officers, they were not motivated by high ideals or the need to serve their country or the British Empire. Now the war was over, there was a retreat from the public to the private sphere and they were, above all, concerned for their own welfare. Having accepted during the war that this had to be subordinated to the greater good, they could look to the future and start to think again about their personal needs and ambitions.<sup>46</sup>

### **A younger generation?**

It has been common practice in German historiography and culture to classify people as belonging to a particular age group or 'generation', following theoretical work by Karl Mannheim and Helmut Fogt,<sup>47</sup> according to which, for a 'generation' to be of historical significance, a group of people need to share common experiences and have a similar understanding of the meaning of historical events, as well as having been born within the same period of time.<sup>48</sup> It is not claimed that a generational framework explains British actions and attitudes in Germany, in the same way as, for example, Christina von Hodenberg used generations as a model to explain changes in post-war German media,<sup>49</sup> but a categorisation by age and a comparison between older and younger 'generations', can make it easier to understand some of the diversity of views among the British in occupied Germany.

The Military Governors and army generals discussed in Part 1 were all born within a few years of each other.<sup>50</sup> They shared similar experiences in their early lives and possessed a common understanding of historical events, such as the First World War and the British Empire, so they appear to meet the criteria required for consideration as a 'generation'. They

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<sup>45</sup> IWM SA, John Ashcombe

<sup>46</sup> Similar views were held by many other British soldiers facing demobilisation at the end of the war, as described in Alan Allport, *Demobbed*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009)

<sup>47</sup> Karl Mannheim: 'Der Problem der Generationen', *Kölner Vierteljahrshefte für Sociologie* No.7, 1928, pp157-185 and pp309-330; Helmut Fogt, *Politische Generationen, Empirische Bedeutung und theoretisches Modell* (Opladen: 1982), cited in Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise: Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit 1945-1973* (Göttingen, Wallstein Verlag, 2006)

<sup>48</sup> For a discussion of the use and relevance of the concept in modern German historiography see Ulrike Jureit & Michael Wildt (eds.), *Generationen: Zur Relevanz eines wissenschaftlichen Grundbegriffs* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2005).

<sup>49</sup> Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*

<sup>50</sup> Robertson was born in 1896, Bishop in 1897, Horrocks in 1895, Templer in 1898, Douglas in 1893 and Montgomery, the oldest, in 1887

all received a traditional public school education, followed (with the exception of Douglas who went to Oxford University) by attendance at the Military Academies at Sandhurst or Woolwich, where they were commissioned as officers. They all fought as young men in the First World War and stayed on as regular soldiers or re-joined the forces later. In the interwar years they served in the British Empire, in India, the Middle East or Africa, and attended or taught at the army or RAF staff colleges. Though not from especially wealthy or aristocratic families, they were very much part of the British professional establishment. They had grown up at a time when the British Empire was at its height, fought to defend the Empire in the First World War and worked to protect and preserve its power and influence in the interwar years.

The four young officers considered in this chapter were around 25-30 years younger, born between 1920 and 1926. Eleven of the IWM interviewees were the same age and ten a little older, born between 1913 and 1919. Although the family background of the four 'protagonists' was similar to that of the senior officers, analysis of the wider group of IWM Sound Archive interviewees, who had little in common apart from their age, reveals the limitations of a generational form of analysis. Class and social background, religious convictions, their expectations of what to do when the war was over, and their personal skills, training and aptitudes, appear to have had at least as great an influence on their understanding of their task in Germany, as any shared experience as a generational cohort. Their experiences before joining the forces were very different. Some had already left school and spent several years at work, some had been to university for a year or two before being called up, others joined as soon as they left school. There were significant differences in outlook even within the small group of university students at Oxford during the war. One IWM interviewee said that there were no pacifists at Oxford in 1942, all were servicemen and 'deeply engaged on the whole thing',<sup>51</sup> whereas another, also a student at Oxford but himself a pacifist and conscientious objector (CO), recalled that there were 'quite a lot of students at Oxford who were also COs.'<sup>52</sup>

Yet despite diversity in personal background and outlook, all four young officers and many of the IWM interviewees later remembered the war and its aftermath as a significant formative

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<sup>51</sup> IWM SA, Frank Arthur Bicknell

<sup>52</sup> IWM SA, Harland

influence on the rest of their lives. Michael Palliser, for example, said that his experience in Europe and Germany at the end of the war had made him a convinced European, as this was the best way of trying to ensure that the devastation and destruction he saw then would never be repeated and war between two European countries, such as France and Germany, would become unthinkable.<sup>53</sup> On a more personal level, John Chaloner referred, in a semi-autobiographical novel published in 1991, to the combination of starting his first successful publishing venture and experiencing his 'first love affair of timeless but futureless passion', as 'a pattern he would always seek for the rest of his life.'<sup>54</sup> To some extent therefore, the 'younger generation' of young men and a few women in occupied Germany did share a common experience during the war and after, and a comparison with the older and stronger 'generation' of senior officers can reveal similarities and differences between the two groups.

### **Reactions to death and destruction**

The statistics of the scale of damage to the major towns and cities in Germany are well known, with official British figures stating that in Cologne, for example, 66 per cent of the houses were totally destroyed and in Düsseldorf 93 per cent were uninhabitable.<sup>55</sup> According to government statistics, around 600,000 civilians in Germany were killed by bombing raids, compared with 62,000 in Britain. A further 900,000 civilians were wounded and 7.5 million made homeless.<sup>56</sup> Many more civilians, of course, were killed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union during the German invasion and retreat,<sup>57</sup> but British soldiers did not see this for themselves.

Whereas the senior officers quoted previously, and other observers including journalists and war correspondents, reacted with apparent shock and wrote that 'you have to see it to believe it', only a few of the young officers and IWM interviewees discussed in this chapter responded similarly to ruined buildings and the scale of destruction in the German cities. The senior officers could tell a relatively simple story, which emphasised their own achievements,

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<sup>53</sup> IWM SA, Palliser

<sup>54</sup> John Chaloner, *Occupational Hazard* (Wallington, Surrey: Severn House Publishers, 1991), p402

<sup>55</sup> Michael Balfour and John Mair, *Four Power Control in Germany and Austria 1945-1946* (Oxford: Survey of International Affairs 1939-1946, Oxford University Press, 1956), p7

<sup>56</sup> Alice Förster and Birgit Beck, 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and World War II: Can a Psychiatric Concept help us Understand Postwar Society' in Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, (eds.) *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp28-9; Jordan (ed.), *Conditions of Surrender*, p149

<sup>57</sup> Jordan (ed.), *Conditions of Surrender*, p149, gives figures of an estimated 4.2 million civilians killed in Poland and 7 million in the Soviet Union.

of chaos and destruction followed by the restoration of law and order. The younger generation may have related the ruined cities they saw in Germany to their personal experiences, which were largely those of wartime, and assumed that death and destruction were an obvious consequence of war, too well-known to be worth mentioning.

The few who did refer to the scale of destruction in Germany showed a mixed response. Two IWM interviewees described it as shocking and unjustified.<sup>58</sup> The scale of destruction in Berlin and the industrial towns of the Ruhr made a lasting impression on those stationed there, such as one young man, who was part of the British advance guard sent to Berlin in 1945: 'It was like the rest of Germany really ... No-one who didn't see Germany in 1945 and 1946 knows what bombing's all about ... It really appalled everyone ... You don't let much worry you at that age' but 'it appalled me.' There were still many bodies buried under the rubble. The summer of 1945 was very hot and after it rained the smell was terrible. He added that he could understand why Bomber Harris was ostracised after the war and that the destruction of Dresden could be compared to a war atrocity.<sup>59</sup> Others, however, assumed that destruction on this scale was an inevitable consequence of war, perhaps regrettable, perhaps a notable achievement which had contributed to winning the war, but no more than the Germans deserved and had inflicted on others.

Michael Howard had not seen active service in the war. When asked in an interview in 2008 about the condition of Osnabrück, he replied that it was quite severely damaged, but what struck him most was that it must have been the target for medium artillery as many houses had lost their roofs and top floors: 'Yes, it was a pretty desolate place.' The barracks where he stayed was relatively undamaged but the town was a heap of rubble. This was much as expected and made no particular impression on him: 'It was much as it ought to be.'<sup>60</sup> Contemporary letters to his parents gave a slightly different, but not inconsistent, picture. The scale of destruction, he wrote, was an 'amazing sight', but he did not draw any conclusions from this, apart from describing his concern for the animals and children, (who presumably, in his view, did not share responsibility for the war with the adults), and

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<sup>58</sup> IWM SA, Samuel Falle, James Samuel Chambers

<sup>59</sup> IWM SA, Chambers

<sup>60</sup> IWM SA, Howard

expressing the conventional view that the bombing had been effective in destroying Germany's ability to wage another war for 'some forty years.'<sup>61</sup>

When Michael Palliser was asked in 2010 if he was surprised by the destruction he saw in German towns and cities, he related this to his own experiences of bombing in Britain, fighting in Normandy, and having to 'knock out' church spires in Holland, which might 'appear savage', but was necessary as they made an ideal observation and sniper post for the enemy.<sup>62</sup> Without being explicit, he appeared to be making two points: that the destruction was not unique to Germany, and that destruction was sometimes an undesirable but necessary means to an end. Later in the interview, he told the story of a conversation with a Swedish businessman, in the restaurant car of a train travelling through the industrial cities of the Ruhr. The Swede looked out of the window at this 'absolute lunar landscape' and 'banged on about how dreadful we'd been to bomb the Ruhr.' Palliser was furious with his companion who 'had enjoyed his neutrality during the war' and replied that if he looked at cities like London and Coventry, he would soon realise that the Ruhr was not unique.<sup>63</sup>

Palliser was incorrect in telling his Swedish travelling companion that the extent of damage caused by Allied bombing in the Ruhr was similar to that in London or Coventry, though he may have believed this at the time. As the official statistics showed, the destruction of buildings and number of civilian casualties was far greater in Germany than in Britain and far greater in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe than in Germany. But Palliser was surely correct that the destruction of the Ruhr and other German cities was not unique, and needed to be placed in the wider context of whether the end justified the means.

### **War crimes and Holocaust survivors**

Only four of the twenty-one IWM interviewees made any mention of the Holocaust, war crimes or atrocities. One was an officer who was a member of the panel on a trial at the Volkswagen works, where 450 babies born to Displaced Persons were kept in a nursery and allowed to starve to death.<sup>64</sup> Another was a lawyer who worked as a prosecutor for the Judge Advocate General's department. Some of those he prosecuted were, in his view quite

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<sup>61</sup> Howard, *Otherwise Occupied*, p14, p54

<sup>62</sup> IWM SA, Palliser

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> IWM SA, Martin Cosmo Hastings

rightly, found guilty and condemned to death, such as a German official who had taken an Allied airman, who had landed by parachute, to his office and shot him, and an interrogator at Neuengamme concentration camp, who fitted a spike to a chair, operated by a pedal, to make those he questioned stand up more quickly; an idea he had taken from Dachau. Occasionally, though, he dealt with cases he was less sure about, such as six German civilians accused of ill-treating an RAF officer. 'They had done it', he said, but 'most people would have done the same after an air raid' and it could be difficult to understand that while the pilot was in an aeroplane they could shoot him, but if he landed by parachute, he was a POW and they must not touch him. On balance he considered 'it was fairly done.'<sup>65</sup>

Whereas most cases of war crimes were clear cut, others were less so. With incomplete information, it could be difficult to know how victims met their fate. Another officer, based at Travemünde on the Baltic coast, spoke of a 'ghastly incident' in April or May 1945, shortly before the surrender, when a ship in the harbour, loaded with camp victims, was taken out to sea and sunk by the guards. At least, he said, that was one story. Another was that the ship had been sunk by a British aircraft and he was inclined to believe this second version. In June a large number of bodies were washed up on the beach and SS prisoners-of-war were made to haul out the bodies.<sup>66</sup>

It is sometimes claimed that British and American soldiers who witnessed the liberation of the concentration camps were provoked to acts of revenge. Richard Bessel, for example, referred to US forces after the liberation of Dachau, where 'Germans were gunned down while surrendering; captives were shot at the slightest provocation...'<sup>67</sup> He claimed that the liberation of Bergen Belsen had a similar effect on the British, taking as an example the British military commandant at Münster who was 'inclined initially to take a punitive attitude towards the German population due to [his] personal experiences of liberating the camps.'<sup>68</sup> For the individuals examined in this chapter, however, there is no evidence that initial

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<sup>65</sup> IWM SA, James Robert Heppell

<sup>66</sup> IWM SA, Bicknell. The officer was probably correct. On 3 May 1945 the *Cap Arcona* and two other ships holding former inmates from Neuengamme concentration camp were attacked by the RAF on the mistaken assumption they were troop transports. Around 7,000 prisoners were burnt, drowned or shot trying to escape. See Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: from War to Peace* (London, New York, Sydney, Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2009), p52

<sup>67</sup> Bessel, *Germany 1945*, p161

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p164



feelings of hatred were translated into acts of revenge.<sup>69</sup> A more common reaction was to make a distinction between those who had committed war crimes and the individuals they met face to face. One IWM interviewee described how they were always hearing rumours of SS atrocities, of their having shot prisoners, or murdered Americans, which made the British soldiers angry:

But when you see a person face to face and he's unarmed you lose this anger and wildness, and just take them prisoner or whatever.<sup>70</sup>

The only two prisoners he took personally were 'a couple of lads of about 16' who 'came out of a wood with their hands up. They were just terrified...'<sup>71</sup>

Only one of those considered in this chapter, John Chaloner, was present at or soon after the liberation of the concentration camps. His sister wrote that seeing Belsen soon after liberation was an experience that affected him deeply and the memory stayed with him for the rest of his life,<sup>72</sup> but there is no record of his referring to it in any public context. He did so only in private conversations and in fictional works based on his experiences in Germany. In his novel *Occupational Hazard*, he described the reaction of a tank crew after seeing Belsen for the first time: 'Two of my men who have after all, seen a few things, were very quiet, and then suddenly sick. They lay on the grass. We brewed up tea, and they had a cigarette and everyone said that nothing was too bad for the Germans.'<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, although the experience was deeply moving, it did not prevent him from making lasting personal friendships with German journalists and editors he met later when re-establishing newspapers in Osnabrück, Lüneburg and Hanover.<sup>74</sup> His sister recalled a long conversation with him about Belsen. She believed that, of all his wartime experiences, it was the one that affected him most deeply, together with seeing tanks either side of him blown up 'with his

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<sup>69</sup> Many influential British observers did not consider revenge a suitable response to war crimes and atrocities. The war journalist Leonard Mosley, who was present at the liberation of Belsen, reported that British soldiers, enraged by the piles of corpses, beat the SS guards and ordered them to collect the bodies 'to the accompaniment of lewd shouts and laughs' but added that it made him 'pensive to see British soldiers beating and kicking men and women, even under such provocation.' L. Mosley, *Report from Germany* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1945), p93. See also Patrick Gordon Walker, *The Lid Lifts* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1945). Gordon-Walker recorded the first Jewish eve of Sabbath service held in Belsen, later broadcast on the BBC. He recorded in his diary that he was at first, 'very angry with the Germans' but argued against a desire for revenge. There was a need, he wrote, to 'restore our respect for death' and 'no human life should be taken away without due formality'. In his view, those responsible for the concentration camps should be punished with the death penalty, but this had to be done by following proper legal processes, not through the same methods as the Nazis.

<sup>70</sup> IWM SA, Mallabar

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> Woodward, Written answers to questions

<sup>73</sup> Chaloner, *Occupational Hazard*, p353

<sup>74</sup> Brawand, *Der Spiegel - ein Besatzungskind*, p196

mates inside', adding that, in later life, he was 'deeply melancholy about man's inhumanity to man.'<sup>75</sup>

Contemporary reports indicate that all British soldiers in Germany knew of the liberation of the camps in April and May 1945, from reports in newspapers or by word of mouth from colleagues, if not from their own experience,<sup>76</sup> but this did not appear to affect their behaviour when carrying out their duties. They combined a harsh view of Germans collectively with a pragmatic view of those they met as individuals. Michael Palliser, for example, said that, although neither he nor anyone in his battalion personally discovered or visited any of the camps, another battalion in his regiment had and they heard accounts 'which were absolutely horrific.' When asked if this changed, or possibly reinforced, his attitude to the Germans, he replied that:

I think it possibly reinforced it a bit. I'm not sure. I think that there was already a feeling that this had been a very barbaric regime, which was partly the result of whatever you like, wartime propaganda and so on, but I wouldn't say we were surprised. I think there was a tendency to say 'how typically German' in the mood of the time. I think that we were almost beyond being surprised by anything.<sup>77</sup>

This attitude was reflected in a similar comment from the officer on the war crimes panel at the Volkswagen works, who, when asked why the babies had starved to death, replied that: 'It was just typical German ... [The Germans believed] they were Slav and there was nothing lower in life.'<sup>78</sup> When asked about the camps, he replied that he had not seen any himself, but knew others who had. He added, incongruously, that he went to Belsen once, to buy a dog from some Germans who had moved into the huts.<sup>79</sup> A second interviewee said that he passed through Belsen in June 1946, when leaving Germany, but it had been cleared and there were no inmates.<sup>80</sup>

These anecdotes illustrate a possible reason why the care of former inmates of the concentration camps, especially Jewish survivors, was not given the priority by the British

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<sup>75</sup> Woodward, Written answers to questions

<sup>76</sup> E.g. WO32/15772, Report by Lt. Col. J.H.A. Sparrow (later Warden of All Soul's College, Oxford), 'Report on Visit to 21 Army Group and Tour of Second Army 30<sup>th</sup> March to 5<sup>th</sup> May 1945'. Sparrow reported that all knew of the 'uncovering' of the camps but reactions were mixed. While there was some increase in hostility to Germans generally, most British soldiers made a distinction between the SS, who they believed were responsible for the camps, and the 'ordinary Germany citizen'.

<sup>77</sup> IWM SA, Palliser

<sup>78</sup> IWM SA, Martin Cosmo Hastings

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> IWM SA, Bicknell

occupiers that many historians believed it should.<sup>81</sup> The number of Jewish survivors in the British Zone was relatively low compared to the US Zone and remained constant throughout most of the occupation period. Estimates vary, but in June 1946 the number of Jewish Displaced Persons in the British Zone was calculated by UNRRA as 19,373, around half of whom were accommodated in Hohné camp, near Bergen Belsen, and most of the remainder in cities such as Hamburg, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Hanover and Kiel.<sup>82</sup> In the US Zone the number was higher, around 36,000 in January 1946,<sup>83</sup> and increased rapidly, due to immigration of around 250,000 Jews from Eastern Europe.<sup>84</sup> With a few exceptions, such as John Chaloner, most of the British occupiers did not experience the liberation of the camps or meet Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Many more would have encountered the far larger number of Russian, Polish and East European Displaced Persons (DPs), of whom there were over two million in the British Zone at the end of the war, over 600,000 in October 1945 and 365,872, mostly Polish DPs, in June 1946.<sup>85</sup>

For those not personally affected, or who had not seen the liberation of camps, the Holocaust, though recognised as 'absolutely horrific', could appear as something that had occurred in the past, rather than as a major concern for the present and future, and not morally, but numerically insignificant compared to the two million DPs who remained in the British Zone after the end of the war and five million ethnic German refugees who arrived in the zone between 1945 and 1951.<sup>86</sup> The approach of trying to draw a line under the horrors of the past was perhaps best typified by an eight page supplement on Belsen in the second issue of the *British Zone Review* on 13 October 1945. This was described as: 'An account, based on Official Reports, of the uncovering by the British Army of the Belsen Concentration camp and of the action taken during the vital days to minimise the suffering of the 60,000 inmates.'

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<sup>81</sup> For example, Ursula Büttner, 'Not nach der Befreiung. Die Situation der Deutschen Juden in der britischen Besatzungszone 1945 – 1948' in *Das Unrechtsregime Vol. 2* (Hamburg: Christians, 1986), pp373-406; Frank Stern, 'The Historic Triangle: Occupiers, Germans and Jews in postwar Germany', in Robert G. Moeller (ed.), *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society and Culture in the Adenauer Era* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp199-229

<sup>82</sup> Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit: Britische humanitäre Hilfe in Deutschland, Die Helfer, die Befreiten und die Deutschen* (Osnabrück: secolo Verlag, 2000), pp104-5, p123; See also Büttner, 'Not nach der Befreiung', pp374-5; Hagit Lavsky, 'A Community of Survivors: Bergen-Belsen as a Jewish Centre after 1945' in Jo Reilly, David Cesarani, Tony Kushner, Colin Richmond (eds.) *Belsen in History and Memory* (London & Portland Oregon: Frank Cass, 1997), pp162-177

<sup>83</sup> Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*, p101

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p100; Atina Grossmann, 'Trauma, Memory and Motherhood: Germans and Jewish Displaced persons in Post-Nazi Germany, 1945-1949', in Bessel and Schumann, (eds.), *Life after Death*, pp97-98

<sup>85</sup> Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*, p130

<sup>86</sup> Balfour and Mair, *Four Power Control*, p121

The story of that greatest of all exhibitions of 'man's inhumanity to man' which was Belsen Concentration Camp is known throughout the world. Therefore it is not intended to repeat it here except very briefly, and then only as background for the story of what the British soldier did with the aid of British medical students and units of the British Red Cross to succour its tens of thousands of stricken inmates to prevent the spread in epidemic form of the disease and infection there found, and finally to wipe Belsen off the face of the earth.<sup>87</sup>

Belsen was therefore presented as something which was uniquely horrifying and 'known throughout the world', but which had occurred in the past, been dealt with and was now best 'wiped off the face of the earth.'

### 7.3 Two individuals, out of step with official policy

*'We have been forced by the change of policy to come out with our hands up in a lot of cases, and I don't like it. About every third day I put up a very strong protest, and one of these days I am going to be jumped on.'*<sup>88</sup>

*'I know myself that this business of producing a magazine means not just an exciting new idea but real hard work, patience, a keenness that must not flag and a willingness to go on learning; all things that cannot be gained without sweat, blood and some tears.'*<sup>89</sup>

Despite a general lack of idealism and the absence of the 'missionary spirit' so evident among the senior offices, a few young officers, such as Chaloner and Howard, took the initiative to go beyond the call of duty to do what they considered right, even when this was not consistent with official policy. Their stories illustrate how the legacy of the British occupation could depend on individual initiative. Michael Howard started by looking for an interesting job and useful experience for a few months before going to university, but became absorbed in his work. He continued to pursue his original goals of 'evacuating' material and equipment from Germany to benefit the British economy, as official policy changed, until the Deputy Military Governor, Brian Robertson, issued a directive that removals should cease.<sup>90</sup> John Chaloner exceeded his authority by creating a magazine he knew would be critical of the British and Allied authorities, because he believed that a free

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<sup>87</sup> *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.2, 13 Oct. 1945

<sup>88</sup> Howard, *Otherwise Occupied*, p300

<sup>89</sup> DSA 1381, letter from Chaloner to Ormond, 31 Oct. 1946

<sup>90</sup> John E. Farquharson, 'Governed or Exploited? The British Acquisition of German Technology, 1945-48', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.32, No.1, (1997), p40

press should be popular, easy to read and independent of the government. Remarkably, with the help of two Jewish staff sergeants and a team of talented German editors and journalists, he succeeded.

Howard and Chaloner started their work in Germany believing that what they were doing was consistent with overall British objectives, but by the time they left, this was no longer the case. And, in both cases, despite successful careers after the war, their sense of injustice, that their efforts and achievements have never been fully recognised, remained for the rest of their lives.

### **Michael Howard: The story of T-Force**

Michael Howard had been offered a place at Cambridge University and hoped for the shortest possible stay in Germany before his demobilisation.<sup>91</sup> At first he expected to return home in October 1946, after a stay of no more than six months, but things turned out better than he had imagined with his appointment as Intelligence Officer for No 1 T-Force.<sup>92</sup> In addition to being pleased at finding a responsible job, he believed he was doing something to help his country. On 10 May 1946 he wrote home that:

This is the only unit in Germany which is not a liability to the taxpayer in that the consequences of the work have a considerable and direct bearing on our economic recovery. This does help one feel that one is doing a good job of work.<sup>93</sup>

Having just missed active service, a desire to serve his country may have been more important for him than for those who fought in the war.<sup>94</sup> Over sixty years later, concerned to refute the charge by a *Guardian* journalist that T-Force used 'Gestapo methods' and was engaged in the 'looting of German industry',<sup>95</sup> he wrote that he and his colleagues took satisfaction in the knowledge that:

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<sup>91</sup> IWM SA, Howard

<sup>92</sup> Howard, *Otherwise Occupied*, p45

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, p90

<sup>94</sup> John Bayley, a young officer in the same T-Force unit as Michael Howard, later Warton Professor of English at Oxford University and married to Iris Murdoch, viewed their work very differently. In a novel based on his time in Germany, Bayley portrayed their work as insignificant and the country, Germany, as almost unreal, in the interlude between war and demobilisation. See John Bayley, *In Another Country*, (London: Constable & Co, 1955), pp13-14.

<sup>95</sup> Iain Cobain, 'How T-Force abducted Germany's best brains for Britain', the *Guardian*, 29 Aug. 2007

There was a tangible benefit to be derived for the economic state of the nation from our main and unique role: the evacuation by T-Force of machinery, documents and scientists from the German military/industrial complex.<sup>96</sup>

Howard certainly worked hard. In May 1946 he wrote home that: 'The pressure of work is unparalleled', he was 'evacuating' 150 tons of machinery and 'removing to the U.K.' on average 5 German scientists a week.<sup>97</sup> In December the workload increased again, following a false alarm that their activities would cease at the end of the year. He wrote home to say that: 'The flap is now off, but we still have some £5,000,000 worth of machinery or 6.5 thousand tons to move—so my job isn't folding in on me at any rate.'<sup>98</sup> Later he could not recall where the figure of £5 million came from, but his letters and memoirs show that his perception of the value of reparations obtained by Britain from Germany was very different from figures quoted in official sources.

According to Sean Longden's history of T-Force, UK official receipts for reparations from Germany totalled just over £30 million.<sup>99</sup> Alan Bullock quoted a similar figure of £29 million in his biography of Ernest Bevin.<sup>100</sup> Howard believed these figures were misleading and suggested in his later memoir that the actual figures were many times higher. In December 1946 he wrote to his parents that he had seen a 'confidential document' in which 'the value of T-Force to the country in the last year was given as not less than £100,000,000'<sup>101</sup> and referred to an article in the *Daily Express* of 9 October 1946, which stated that:

A British Government authority agreed with me yesterday that to put the nominal value of our probe into German trade secrets at less than £100,000,000 would be niggardly.<sup>102</sup>

Howard also claimed later that an internal report compiled in 1949 by staff who had worked for T-Force proposed the extraordinary figure of £2 billion as the total value of T-Force to the British economy.<sup>103</sup> This report has not survived, but it is likely that it placed a high value on intangibles, such as documents, patents and technical knowledge transmitted by German scientists recruited to work in Britain.

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<sup>96</sup> Howard, *Otherwise Occupied*, pp92-3

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, pp97-8

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, pp192-3

<sup>99</sup> Longden, *T-Force*, p322

<sup>100</sup> Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p602. First published by William Heinemann Ltd, 1983

<sup>101</sup> Howard, *Otherwise Occupied*, p200

<sup>102</sup> 'Smith and the secrets of Schmidt', *Daily Express*, 9 Oct. 1946, p4

<sup>103</sup> Howard, *Otherwise Occupied*, p205

At the end of 1946 the Board of Trade were still keen to publicise their achievements in extracting benefits for British industry from German scientific and industrial expertise,<sup>104</sup> but other factors had already started to work in the opposite direction, making it in the interests of the government to under-state, and possibly conceal, the full value of reparations obtained from Germany. Instead of being an asset that could be exploited for reparations, the British Zone proved to be an economic liability, requiring financial support estimated in the April 1946 budget at £80 million for the 1946-47 financial year.<sup>105</sup> Despite attempts to increase industrial production and coal exports, there was no prospect of the zone moving to financial surplus for several years. Hence it was not in Britain's economic interests to extract reparations or remove equipment, which might damage the economy of the zone still further and increase the level of support required. Policy makers and officials such as Howard had to perform a delicate balancing act, extracting what they could to benefit British economic and commercial interests, while not adversely affecting economic recovery in Germany.

According to the Potsdam Agreement, the Soviet Union was entitled to 25% of the total value of reparations from the Western Zones,<sup>106</sup> and following the formation of IARA, the Inter-Allied Reparations Agency, in January 1946, Britain was also obliged to account for and share reparations with 17 other Western Allies.<sup>107</sup> The British were therefore paying all the costs of occupation in their zone, while having to share with their Allies any economic benefit gained from exploiting it for reparations. At the same time, they were trying to persuade the US to pay a greater share of the costs, mainly food imports.<sup>108</sup> It was therefore in their interest to under-report the value they booked on their own account, to avoid prejudicing negotiations with the Soviet Union and Western European Allies on how reparations from Germany were shared,<sup>109</sup> and with the US on the costs of supporting the British Zone.

<sup>104</sup> Industrialists were encouraged to make use of 'Germany's war-time advances in science and heavy industry' at an exhibition, organised by the Board of Trade, which opened in London on 9 Dec. 1946 and toured the country. See 'German Advances in Science', *The Times*, 10 Dec. 1946, p2.

<sup>105</sup> Hugh Dalton, *High Tide and After* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd, 1962), pp112-113

<sup>106</sup> Protocol of the Proceedings of the Berlin (Potsdam) Conference 1 Aug. 1945, Section III, clauses 4a and 4b. [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/truman/psources/ps\\_potsdam.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/truman/psources/ps_potsdam.html) accessed 17 May 2010]

<sup>107</sup> Farquharson, 'Governed or Exploited?', p25

<sup>108</sup> Balfour and Mair, *Four Power Control*, p139; Robert Carden, 'Before Bizonia: Britain's economic dilemma in Germany 1945-6', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.14, (1979), pp535-555. An agreement between the UK and US on sharing costs in the 'Bizone' equally was signed on 2 Dec. 1946. A revised agreement, which gave the US greater economic control in return for paying a higher share of the costs, was agreed in Dec. 1947.

<sup>109</sup> Farquharson, 'Governed or Exploited?', p32, p34, p41, provided various examples of alleged errors in British reparations accounts and practices, such as IARA expressing grave concerns on unaccounted removals, attacks in Pravda on the British policy of lodging German patents in London, and incorrect 'fictitious' figures given by the British government to the USSR at the Spring 1947 Council of Foreign Ministers.

For Michael Howard, the practical effect of these shifts in policy was that he had to obtain agreement from his colleagues in the Control Commission Economics Division before items could be 'evacuated' to England. He described with evident satisfaction one occasion when he, a junior Captain, was able to over-rule a full Colonel working for the Control Commission and remove some high grade alloy tanks, which had been used for fuel for V2 rockets, but which the German factory and the Control Commission said were now required for the storage of milk.<sup>110</sup> On other occasions his objectives became as much to deprive the Russians of material as to secure it for the British.<sup>111</sup>

As the activities of T-Force were wound down, he wrote to his parents that, despite his dislike of the new policy, he remained committed to the job. His use of military metaphors suggests that, having just missed active service, he was still trying to make a personal contribution to the war effort:

The routine part of my work has for all practical purposes ceased. I still have one or two violent rearguard actions to fight: T-Force has been my hobby as much as my job, and there are several battles going on which I should be very sorry to see lost. We have been forced by the change of policy to come out with our hands up in a lot of cases, and I don't like it. About every third day I put up a very strong protest, and one of these days I am going to be jumped on.<sup>112</sup>

Although official policy had changed, he continued fighting his personal battle to achieve the original goal of securing material and equipment to assist Britain's economic recovery, though without the support of his own HQ, let alone that of other parts of the Control Commission responsible for promoting economic recovery in Germany. He later quoted what he described as the 'rather broken-backed' reply he received from his superior following an attempt to enlist his support:

You can see the trend of high policy in Germany & it is, clearly, at any cost to put Germany back to work so that we can be repaid some of our current expenses—the future can apparently look after itself. In this light T-Force activities in the document & equipment field are obviously a hindrance & they must be terminated willy-nilly at the earliest opportunity.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> IWM SA, Howard

<sup>111</sup> Ibid

<sup>112</sup> Howard, *Otherwise Occupied*, p300

<sup>113</sup> Howard, *Otherwise Occupied*, p301



Michael Howard left Germany in December 1947, to take up his place at Cambridge. A sense that his and his colleagues' efforts and achievements have never been fully recognised has stayed with him for the rest of his life.<sup>114</sup>

### **John Chaloner: The English army officer who created *Der Spiegel***

When John Chaloner died in February 2007, his obituary in *The Times* described him as a 'Distributor of foreign journals who, with *Der Spiegel*, reinstated press freedom in Germany.'<sup>115</sup> However, although he had the original idea, created the first dummy and took the decision to go ahead and print the first issue of *Diese Woche*, the precursor of *Der Spiegel*, he had little involvement with the day-to-day running of the magazine, which he left to his two German-speaking Jewish staff sergeants and team of German editors and journalists. Nevertheless, his role in creating *Der Spiegel* was to overshadow his achievements in later life, resulting in a sense of pride and achievement on the one hand but, on the other, lasting resentment at being officially reprimanded and losing his post, for initiating what turned out to be a great success.<sup>116</sup>

The decision to create the magazine was taken entirely on his own initiative, at a time when official British policy had already changed from direct to indirect control; from establishing new publications, to transferring ownership and management to approved German licensees.<sup>117</sup> Ironically, this action by an individual officer, out of step with official policy, was to prove more influential for the future of the press in West Germany than any other action the British took in the field of printed media. The circulation of *Der Spiegel* rose from 50,000 copies per week in early 1947 to 110,000 in 1951 and 811,000 in 1966, far higher than other political weekly magazines.<sup>118</sup> By the end of the 1950s, the distinctive style of *Der Spiegel* was adopted as a model by much of the German press.<sup>119</sup> In 1962 in what has become known as the 'Spiegel Affair', the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, tried to close the

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<sup>114</sup> Howard cooperated with Sean Longden in his history of T-Force published in 2009. He reviewed it for the Royal United Services Institute journal and praised it for being endowed with 'a lively immediacy' but considered it a shame that Longden did not hazard a view as to the true value of the material, both tangible and intangible 'evacuated' by himself and his colleagues. He ended the review by asking, rhetorically, if the history of T-Force was 'the last great untold story.' See Michael Howard, 'Review of Sean Longden, T-Force: the Race for Nazi War Secrets 1945', *RUSI Journal*, (December 2008), pp108-110

<sup>115</sup> John Chaloner Obituary, *The Times*, 16 Feb. 2007.

<sup>116</sup> Joan Woodward, written answers to questions

<sup>117</sup> FO 1056/27, memorandum from PR/ISC group, on 'Information Services in Germany', 12 April 1946

<sup>118</sup> Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, p90

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, pp219-225

publication, after it revealed details of a NATO manoeuvre. The attempt failed after widespread protests. The 'affair' led to the resignation of the Defence Minister, Franz Josef Strauss, and has been regarded as one of the first major tests of post-war German democracy.<sup>120</sup>

John Chaloner's involvement with the magazine was short, lasting no more than eight or nine months. In April 1946, while based in Osnabrück, he and two German secretaries put together a dummy from translations of articles and pictures from various newspapers and magazines obtained from England. At some point over the next three or four months, Chaloner took the dummy to Military Government Public Relations and Information Services Control (PR/ISC) headquarters and received authorisation to go ahead.<sup>121</sup> He persuaded one of his staff sergeants, Harry Bohrer, a German-speaking Jewish exile from Prague, who had no previous experience of journalism, to act as editor-in-chief. He appointed another staff sergeant, Henry Ormond, also a Jewish exile, as business manager and work started in earnest in October.<sup>122</sup> Chaloner and Bohrer recruited a team of German journalists, including the future editor and publisher, Rudolf Augstein, whom Chaloner had employed some months earlier to work on the daily newspaper, the *Hannoverschen Nachrichtenblatt*.<sup>123</sup> They shared the same birthday; Augstein was exactly one year older than Chaloner.

Preparations for launch went ahead at breakneck speed. Paper, office equipment, supplies and transport were a constant problem. Newsprint for the first three issues was provided direct from the UK, an extraordinary achievement given the drastic paper rationing in force in both Britain and Germany.<sup>124</sup> Two pre-production dummy issues were produced, dated 25 October and 1 November. Chaloner wrote to Ormond to congratulate him and the staff:

I know myself that this business of producing a magazine means not just an exciting new idea but real hard work, patience, a keenness that must not flag and a willingness to go on learning; all things that cannot be gained without sweat, blood and some tears. The fact that you have started from scratch and have always to compete against to-day's appalling shortages, doubles the meaning of your success.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Herbert, 'Liberalisierung als Lernprozeß', p29; Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp172ff

<sup>121</sup> Brawand, *Der Spiegel - ein Besatzungschild*, p65, pp95-6

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, p66, p98

<sup>123</sup> Brawand, *Der Spiegel - ein Besatzungschild*, p31, p101

<sup>124</sup> DSA 1381, letter and report initialled 'O' to 'Press Chief', 2 Nov. 1946 and 14 Dec. 1946

<sup>125</sup> DSA 1381, letter from Chaloner to Ormond, 31 Oct. 1946

As this message shows, the mechanics of production and availability of supplies offered tremendous challenges. Echoing Churchill's wartime exhortations, Chaloner wrote that they could not succeed without 'sweat, blood and some tears.' He was interested in the layout and appearance of the magazine, the typeface and style of writing and in motivating his staff, but appeared to have little interest in the content, leaving this to Harry Bohrer and his team of German journalists.

Although published by a British Military Government unit, the paper did not set out to represent or promote British views. In an interview with *Der Spiegel* in 2006, in response to a question asking why he decided to create the magazine, Chaloner explained that, above all, he wanted to establish a paper that was independent of the government:

It was to strongly develop the independence of the German press, so that there could be no question of it following the Hitler pattern, that it was somehow a government-owned organisation or publication.<sup>126</sup>

In Chaloner's view the greatest danger to British interests came, not from a hostile press, but from hostile governments. If this meant that his magazine published articles that were critical of the British and Allied authorities, then so be it. As he said in the interview: 'that seemed to me the natural role of a so-called free press.'<sup>127</sup>

His superiors, however, did not entirely share his idealistic, if naïve, view of a free and independent press. The first issue of the magazine, then called *Diese Woche* (This Week), appeared on 16 November 1946, without, it appears, formal authorisation to go ahead with printing or putting copies on sale. According to one story, shortly before it was due to go to press, Chaloner received a letter stating that certain conditions had to be met. He told his secretary, 'I have not read this letter' and denied ever having received it.<sup>128</sup> In another account, his two staff sergeants were in his office when he received an order to stop the printing. He told them to swear the telegram had arrived after he left the office.<sup>129</sup>

The magazine included a number of stories which were critical of the British authorities and their Soviet former allies. One article described how a German refugee from the Soviet Zone

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<sup>126</sup> DSA, interview with John Chaloner, 2 Nov. 2006

<sup>127</sup> Ibid

<sup>128</sup> Brawand, *Der Spiegel - ein Besatzungskind*, p165

<sup>129</sup> Woodward, Written answers to questions

had escaped from a train, full of German scientists and technicians being taken by force to Russia.<sup>130</sup> A second described how soldiers in the Second Polish Corps in Italy, under the command of General Anders, did not wish to return home, quoting General Anders telling a press conference that many who had already done so had been transported across the Urals, to a large 'concentration camp' in Siberia.<sup>131</sup> According to Brawand's history of *Der Spiegel*, Augstein was summoned by the British authorities to answer accusations that such articles provided ammunition to unrepentant Nazis. He replied that he and his colleagues were doing no more than repeating stories which had already appeared in British publications, widely available in Germany and held up to them as models for their own work.<sup>132</sup>

Chaloner was summoned a few days later to answer accusations of having 'collaborated with the enemy' through giving excess freedom to, and working too closely with, Augstein and the other German journalists.<sup>133</sup> On 29 November 1946, C.J.S. Sprigge, Chief of the British Public Relations and Information Services Control division (PR/ISC), confirmed the decisions he and his senior colleagues had reached in the case. Chaloner was to be officially reprimanded for exceeding his responsibilities in going to press without authorisation and should have 'nothing whatever to do with the paper from this moment.'<sup>134</sup>

What happened next is uncertain. Chaloner remained in post at least until the end of December,<sup>135</sup> though he appears to have had no further involvement with the magazine. Four further issues of *Diese Woche* appeared, on 30 November, 7 and 14 December, and a Christmas double issue on 21 December. The staff sergeants, Harry Bohrer and Henry

<sup>130</sup> 'Auch ein Ostflüchtling: Er wollte nicht nach Rußland', *Diese Woche*, No.1, 16 Nov. 1946, p4 (Another refugee from the East: he didn't want to go to Russia)

<sup>131</sup> '...und wohin mit den Polen?' *Diese Woche*, No.1, 16 Nov. 1946, p10

<sup>132</sup> Brawand, *Der Spiegel - ein Besatzungschild*, pp131-2. Augstein was correct in his claim. A similar article on the 'Future of the Problem Poles' appeared in the British magazine *News Review*, 7 Nov. 1946, 9 days before the first issue of *Diese Woche*. Augstein used same argument when criticised later, in June 1947, by the British censor for publishing a cartoon of Stalin. See DSA 1381, letter from 'Censorship officer, for Senior PR/ISC officer, Land Niedersachsen' to 'The Editor, Der Spiegel', 30 June 1947 and reply from Augstein to Deneke, 30 June 1947.

<sup>133</sup> Brawand, *Der Spiegel - ein Besatzungschild*, pp156-8

<sup>134</sup> FO 1056/16 folio 195, letter from Sprigge to Bayer, 29 Nov. 1946 and folio 195A, letter from Sprigge to Gibson, 29 Nov. 1946

<sup>135</sup> DSA, letter from Chaloner to 8 papers, including *Diese Woche*, 16 Dec. 1946, concerning availability of paper

Ormond remained in post<sup>136</sup> and articles critical of the British and other Allies continued to appear.<sup>137</sup>

Sometime between 11 and 13 December, Chaloner was summoned again to meet Brigadier Gibson, deputy head of PR/ISC, to explain why another proposed magazine, *Das Andere Deutschland* ['The Other Germany'], had still not been published, due to a shortage of paper, ten months after Gibson had given instructions to go ahead.<sup>138</sup> According to Brawand, Chaloner had diverted the newsprint intended for *Das Andere Deutschland* to *Diese Woche*.<sup>139</sup> In a letter to Lt. Col. Bayer, Chaloner's immediate superior, Gibson wrote that the whole thing was 'very mysterious' and he had not quite got to the bottom of it, but they were 'under some pressure to publish [*Das Andere Deutschland*] from personages in England', presumably influential German émigrés, who had long been keen to demonstrate that there was an 'other Germany' different from that of Hitler and the Nazis.<sup>140</sup>

Chaloner later claimed that, as long as he remained in Germany, he was able to protect his protégés, prevent the magazine from being closed and persuade his British colleagues that the licence should be issued to Augstein.<sup>141</sup> I have not been able to verify these claims, but it appears that the magazine had developed a momentum, which would have made it difficult to close without incurring further criticism. Fifteen thousand copies of the first issue of *Diese Woche* were printed and some were soon re-sold on the black market at fifteen times the cover price of one mark.<sup>142</sup> On 9 December Ormond reported that 44,900 copies had been ordered from bookshops and wholesale firms,<sup>143</sup> far more than they were able to supply. A few days later, on 14 December, he reported that 'numerous applications for subscriptions were coming in', from the whole of Germany including the US and Russian Zones, and the number of orders had increased further to 56,800.<sup>144</sup> In January 1947, despite the severe

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<sup>136</sup> DSA 1381

<sup>137</sup> E.g. 'Geistiger Export Deutschlands', *Diese Woche*, No.5, 21 Dec. 1946. The article criticised the work done by Michael Howard and his colleagues in T-Force, (without mentioning the unit by name).

<sup>138</sup> FO 1056/37, letter from Gibson to Bayer, 13 Dec. 1946

<sup>139</sup> Brawand, *Der Spiegel - ein Besatzungschild*, p163

<sup>140</sup> FO 1056/37, letters from Bayer to Gibson, 11 Dec., and from Gibson to Bayer, 13 Dec. 1946

<sup>141</sup> DSA, Interview with John Chaloner, 2 Nov. 2006

<sup>142</sup> Brawand, *Der Spiegel - ein Besatzungschild*, p122. The figure of 15,000 was reported in FO 1056/37, list of licensed newspapers and periodicals in the British Zone, 9 Dec.1946.

<sup>143</sup> DSA 1381, report initialled 'O' to Press Chief, 9 Dec. 1946

<sup>144</sup> DSA 1381, report initialled 'O' to Press Chief, 14 Dec. 1946

paper shortages, Ormond successfully argued for an increase in circulation to 50,000 copies<sup>145</sup> by appealing to Anglo-American rivalry.<sup>146</sup>

At some point, probably towards the end of December, a decision was taken to transfer ownership and issue a preliminary licence to Augstein. This required a change in name and the first issue of *Der Spiegel* appeared on 4 January 1947.<sup>147</sup> A full licence was not issued to Augstein and two colleagues until six months later, in July 1947,<sup>148</sup> after the British authorities had tried and failed to find at least one alternative German licensee.<sup>149</sup>

The magazine survived without Chaloner, who left Hanover in early 1947 and worked briefly as a PR adviser to Montgomery, before being demobilised and returning home.<sup>150</sup> Bohrer and Ormond ceased their involvement with the publication a little later, after the grant of a full licence in July 1947.<sup>151</sup> With Augstein as licence holder and editor, *Der Spiegel* continued to criticise the British and other Allies. Despite some financial difficulties and attempts by the British authorities to impose a temporary ban on publication in August 1948 and August 1950,<sup>152</sup> it emerged in the 1950s as a highly successful, established and influential part of the German media.

Howard's and Chaloner's stories illustrate some of the contradictions of the occupation at its lower levels. The lack of established institutional structures and clear lines of control led to implementation diverging from official policies, which were changing rapidly. Some of the original aims of the occupation, such as Howard's desire to obtain reparations to benefit the British post-war economy, were superseded by concerns over the cost of the occupation and

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<sup>145</sup> FO 1056/37, monthly lists of licensed newspapers and periodicals in the British Zone. The circulation figures for *Diese Woche* and (from 4 Jan 1946) *Der Spiegel* were stated as 15,000 in the 9 Dec. and 9 Jan. lists, and 50,000 in the 9 Feb. List.

<sup>146</sup> DSA 1381, memo initialled 'O' to 'Press Chief', 25 Jan. 1947, 'The Americans seem to be amazed that the British have, for once, put them in the shade, in the newspaper world.'

<sup>147</sup> DSA 1381, report initialled 'O' to 'Press Chief', 31 Dec. 1946. See also letter in the same file from Michael Balfour, head of ISC branch, to Brawand, 18 Jan. 1987, in which Balfour claimed he had second thoughts the day after he signed the licence for *Der Spiegel*, which suggests that this was done at short notice, a few days before the magazine was published under its new name on 4 Jan. 1947.

<sup>148</sup> After 12 July 1947, the 'Impressum' at the back of the magazine changed, from stating it was published with 'preliminary authorisation': 'Herausgegeben von Rudolf Augstein, (mit vorläufiger PR/ISC Genehmigung 600/PR vom 1 Januar 1947)', to the more formal: 'Veröffentlicht unter Zulassung Nr. 123 der Militär-Regierung'. The full licence issued in July 1947 is held at DSA, but no copies of the preliminary licence have survived.

<sup>149</sup> Brawand, *Der Spiegel - ein Besatzungschild*, pp188-89

<sup>150</sup> John Chaloner Obituary, *The Times*, 16 Feb. 2007. It is not clear exactly when Chaloner left Hanover or how long he worked for Montgomery. According to one file he was due to leave the Control Commission at the end of 1946, which is when he would have been due for demobilisation (FO 1056/16, letter from Sprigge to Gibson, 19 Nov.1946). He had left Germany by July 1947, as Bohrer and Ormond, but not Chaloner, attended a party on 11 July 1947 to celebrate the grant of the full licence.

<sup>151</sup> DSA 1382.Bohrer was appointed London representative of *Der Spiegel* after leaving Germany in July 1947. Ormond may have remained involved a little longer.

<sup>152</sup> For criticising Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands in August 1948, and reprinting a banned communist poster in 1950. See FO 1049/1364; FO 1056/318.

the acceleration of the process of devolution of power to Germans. Chaloner's idealistic aim of promoting a free press, independent of government, succeeded in the case of *Der Spiegel* as much through the efforts of his two Jewish staff sergeants and team of young German journalists, as through his own work. Despite instructing Chaloner to cease all involvement with the publication, the British authorities in Germany tolerated the magazine, once it was licensed to Augstein, and allowed it to survive.<sup>153</sup>

Individual British officials, such as Howard, Chaloner, and most of the others considered in this chapter, combined their daily work implementing official policies, as they understood them, to the best of their ability, with pragmatic concerns regarding their personal futures. After the promulgation of Ordinance no. 57 at the end of 1947, they had limited scope to achieve structural change within Germany, as significant administrative powers were devolved to the *Länder*, in health, education and local government. From early 1947 onwards, the establishment of good personal relations with Germans was seen by those at the top as a means of preserving British influence.<sup>154</sup> The number of Control Commission staff reduced rapidly from a peak of 25,740 in January 1947,<sup>155</sup> but for those who remained, personal reconciliation became an occupation objective in its own right. The following section discusses different kinds of engagement between British and Germans, from cooperation at work to friendships, sex and marriage.

## 7.4 Getting to know the Germans

*'My strongest memories really are just getting to know the Germans ... and associating with them. Because I wasn't a bit anti-German in any shape or form. I was brought up not to be anti-anything really.'*<sup>156</sup>

<sup>153</sup> It could be argued that the British were more tolerant of press criticism than their US counterparts. *Der Ruf*, a magazine intended as the voice of the 'younger generation', was closed by US authorities in April 1947. Heinz Norden, the editor of *Heute*, an illustrated magazine founded by US information control staff, was sacked in 1947 for alleged communist sympathies. See Alan Bance (ed.), *The Cultural Legacy of the British Occupation in Germany* (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, Akademischer Verlag Stuttgart, 1997), p140

<sup>154</sup> See above pp179-184

<sup>155</sup> Turner, *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany*, p367. Control Commission staff numbers reduced to 18,363 in Jan. 1948, 11,717 in Jan. 1949 and 7,416 in Jan. 1950.

<sup>156</sup> IWM SA, Thexton

All four of the young officers discussed in detail, and seventeen of the twenty-one IWM Sound Archive interviewees, referred to their impressions of the local population and to meeting Germans in various contexts. Most described their relations with Germans as 'remarkably friendly'.<sup>157</sup> Although the British requisitioned houses and buildings, sometimes placed them under armed guard and erected barbed wire fences around them, reserved hotels and theatres in many cities exclusively for their own use, ate in the mess, shopped in the NAAFI and arranged segregated film performances that excluded the local population, there was a high degree of contact between occupiers and occupied. Despite occasional comments, such as that of Noel Annan in Berlin, who spoke of the British as 'the new lords of creation, [who] swept by in our cars bound for some snug mess remote from hunger and cold',<sup>158</sup> this was not an occupation in which the victors remained isolated from the local population.

When British soldiers and administrators met individual Germans, they generally found them cooperative and friendly. Most were women, children or old men who had little if any direct involvement in the war. Some were clearly victims, having lost their homes, belongings and families. They came to know and like as individuals some Germans who, while denying they had ever supported the Nazis, may have been nominal members of the party or one of its many associated organisations. The attitudes of many British people towards the Germans remained ambivalent, but despite continued mistrust, the occupation reinforced the similarities, rather than the differences, between them.

Early attempts by the occupation authorities to regulate personal relationships, through the ban on any form of fraternisation, including shaking hands or speaking to someone in the street, proved unenforceable and soon broke down. The ban was relaxed in July and September 1945, but official restrictions on personal and social relations remained in place,<sup>159</sup> though these were widely flouted. In some cases, encounters between occupiers and occupied were short lived matters of convenience or necessity, such as casual prostitution, black market deals, instructions to subordinates at work, or attending a film,

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<sup>157</sup> IWM SA, Falle

<sup>158</sup> Noel Annan, *Changing Enemies: The Defeat and Regeneration of Germany* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), p148

<sup>159</sup> FO 1056/30, circular from Chief Administrative Officer, 10 Jan. 1947, summarising current orders on fraternisation



theatre or concert performance. Others developed into longer term relationships, including marriage and friendships which lasted many years after the end of the occupation.

### **Singular or plural?**

During the war the British had been encouraged to view the German people in the plural, collectively all alike, most famously by Vansittart:

The *German* is often a moral creature; the *Germans* never; and it is the *Germans* who count. You will always think of *Germans* in the plural, if you are wise. That is their misfortune and their fault.<sup>160</sup>

In a study of Anglo-German relations, Anthony Nicholls wrote that 'when it came to the practicalities of occupation, the obsession with peculiarities of national character began to wane quite rapidly,' and 'common sense overcame the myths about national character'.<sup>161</sup> The evidence examined for this study, however, suggests that the process of treating people as individuals, rather than collectively as 'Germans', required a conscious effort on both sides. In particular, reconciliation appeared to be dependent on a shared interest of some kind, such as working together, living nearby as neighbours, music or literature, or an attraction to someone of the opposite sex.

Many of the British occupiers came into contact with Germans through their work, and found they were working with, rather than against, their former enemies. A British naval officer, for example, who commanded a German minesweeping flotilla felt this was 'an odd experience', as all he had to defend himself was a revolver, which would have been no help had they attempted to throw him over the side, so he got rid of it. He added:

I have to say this. They work impeccably and are very fine seaman, and I had no problems of any kind at all. They seemed to accept me. I got on well with them. They were very correct.... We operated as if it were a British minesweeping flotilla except they were all Germans. Most incredible.<sup>162</sup>

Thexton assumed that good relations at work meant being willing to socialise with his colleagues outside work, even if this conflicted with official regulations:

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<sup>160</sup> Robert Vansittart, *Black Record* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1941), p18

<sup>161</sup> Anthony J. Nicholls, 'The German 'National Character' in British Perspective' in Ulrike Jordan (ed.), *Conditions of Surrender, Britons and Germans witness the end of the war* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1997), p37

<sup>162</sup> IWM SA, James

Fundamentally it was illegal more or less. But certainly you found that most people had some sort of association [with the Germans] ... One couldn't say: "we're going to have a Christmas party, you can't come" if, say, you work with them every day of the week.<sup>163</sup>

Many German civilians went out of their way to be friendly with the occupying forces, with several IWM interviewees commenting that they were favourably disposed to the British, if only because they were not the Russians.<sup>164</sup> Some British soldiers reciprocated and made a conscious effort to be civil and polite, sometimes friendly, to the Germans they met at work, since that was their understanding of normal social behaviour. An RAF ground crew member in Berlin, for example, when asked about his feelings towards the enemy, described how the wife of an old man working in his billet suffered from polio and he felt sorry for him, saying that despite the 'no fratting' rules, 'if you've got a person working in your billet you've got to talk to them. How the hell can you get him to do anything if you don't talk to him?'<sup>165</sup> A Russian interpreter remarked that relations with the Germans were, on the whole, 'very good and very friendly'.<sup>166</sup> A conscientious objector, who worked with ethnic German refugees from the areas ceded to Poland, when asked about non-fraternisation, said that it did not affect them. His team's remit was to regenerate the local German welfare organisations, such as *Evangelische Hilfswerk*, Caritas, and the Red Cross, and to feed supplies through these organisations. They made friends wherever they could, he said, and he made an enormous number of friends, adding that it was an 'exhilarating period' in his life.<sup>167</sup>

When Michael Palliser was asked if he had much contact with German people he replied 'not much' in the first year or two after the end of the war, but he was referring to social contacts, not those made in the course of his work or with neighbours. A dislike of 'everything German', due to their wartime experiences and prejudices, did not prevent him and his colleagues conducting polite, even friendly, relations with individuals, such as the former owners of a house they requisitioned for their officers' mess in Bad Godesberg. The house was occupied by an aristocratic war widow and her sister, who moved upstairs to the

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<sup>163</sup> IWM SA, Thexton

<sup>164</sup> IWM SA, Mallabar, Bicknell, Falle, Martin Cosmo Hastings

<sup>165</sup> IWM SA, Lucas

<sup>166</sup> IWM SA, Bicknell

<sup>167</sup> IWM SA, Harland

servants' quarters.<sup>168</sup> On one occasion she offered to travel to Cologne to buy a 'spare part' for them and came back in despair, quite unaware of how badly damaged the city was:

She had had no idea of what had happened to Cologne, although she was living in Bad Godesberg which is, what, fifteen miles or something. That seemed to me quite extraordinary. It showed they had lived an extremely restricted life, if you like, during the war in Germany. It was an extraordinary thing. Of course she hadn't found the spare part because whichever shops she tried to go to had all been destroyed. She was very shocked by it. She was a nice person.<sup>169</sup>

Some of the IWM interviewees were surprised at the lack of resistance. A denazification officer said that part of his job was to keep an eye on any sign of opposition, but there was none, and no trace of the Nazi 'werewolf' movement they had anticipated. He thought the Germans were 'just so weary of the whole business.'<sup>170</sup> An NCO in Berlin commented that it was strange meeting German civilians. He had been led to believe that resistance would spring up very quickly, but it never happened, adding: 'Some of the Germans treated us as if we were the victorious army and they were pleased to see us.'<sup>171</sup> His main spare time activity was attending the State Opera, where every Sunday there were performances by the major German orchestras or the ballet. He saw the film *Henry V* for the first time with German subtitles in a German cinema: 'It was as relaxed as that'.<sup>172</sup>

Many of the British occupiers employed German servants, at home or in the officers' mess or clubs, or encountered German tradespeople when they needed goods or services. A woman, in Germany with her husband, revealed that her feelings were mixed towards the Germans who worked for them. They were 'very nice to German people' she said:

We gave them little jobs. You went to the hairdressers and you paid them the money you had to pay them, and you gave them some cigarettes, which were worth a lot.<sup>173</sup>

But she implied that she thought the Germans were not suitably grateful. When asked if Germans had a hard time at the end of the war, she agreed, but added defensively that the British 'had a hard time too' and still shared what they had with the Germans. She repeated

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<sup>168</sup> IWM SA, Palliser

<sup>169</sup> Ibid

<sup>170</sup> IWM SA, Ralph Frederick Dye

<sup>171</sup> IWM SA, Mallabar

<sup>172</sup> Ibid

<sup>173</sup> IWM SA, Norman

the point, as if she felt it was in doubt and needed to be emphasised: 'I think we were all very nice to the people who worked for us.'<sup>174</sup>

### **Friends and lovers**

In some cases, including three of the four young officers considered in this study,<sup>175</sup> relationships between British and Germans developed further, from casual acquaintances, or socialising with neighbours or colleagues at work, to lasting friendships, sexual partnerships, or marriage. Personal relationships between British men and German women were widespread, though the IWM interviewees were reluctant to talk in detail about personal and intimate matters, admitting their own relationships with reluctance or apologies. They presented their experiences as in keeping with generally accepted morality and standards of behaviour, placing their relationships with German women in the context of going out with friends, sightseeing, parties, the cinema, getting to know people at work, meeting the family, or the prospect of marriage. Though anxious to say that the Germans they met were not Nazi supporters, they expressed no sense of disapproval of social or sexual relationships with the defeated enemy.

Among the more senior commissioned officers the position may have been different. When Jan Thexton asked his commanding officer for his permission to marry (as required by the official regulations), the officer tried to dissuade him, saying, 'Look I'd much sooner you married a wog, than marry a German,'<sup>176</sup> (thereby revealing that his prejudices were not confined to the Germans). On the other hand, an NCO in Berlin said that 'the officers were just the same as the other ranks regarding fraternisation'<sup>177</sup> and some IWM interviewees described the hypocrisy of more senior officers, who outwardly disapproved of their men's fraternisation, but had German girlfriends. Jan Thexton recalled accompanying an intelligence officer who 'used to go out at night and tap into all the telephone calls', including 'very senior officers ringing up their popsies and so on, which was totally forbidden at the time.'<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid

<sup>175</sup> Chaloner described his relationship with a woman he called 'Heidi' in his semi-autobiographical novel *Occupational Hazard*. Howard's and Thexton's relationships are discussed further below.

<sup>176</sup> IWM SA, Thexton

<sup>177</sup> IWM SA, Travett

<sup>178</sup> IWM SA, Thexton

According to Michael Howard, all the men and NCOs in his Intelligence Section 'settled in' with German girls and at least two of them eventually married their girlfriends, but he claimed that 'it was different for officers', though attitudes varied and there were exceptions. Two officers in his unit, from a different regiment, had German girlfriends and no one raised any formal objections. Their colleagues in the mess may have frowned on it, but 'not to the extent of being disagreeable about it.' As regards any 'serious entanglement' with the opposite sex, all 'had ambitions' of education or future careers, which would have made it 'extremely foolish' to 'acquire a German bride', so none thought of this as a possibility.<sup>179</sup>

In his later memoir, Howard gave a frank account of his relationship with the daughter of the local doctor, which indicates that perhaps it was not so different for officers. The story combines elements of a holiday romance, in a strange but generally friendly country, with changing perceptions of the former enemy. The doctor owned the house in which Howard and other officers were billeted. He and his family had to move out, but he was allowed to keep three consulting rooms on the ground floor so he could continue his practice, and his family retained use of the garden. Howard wrote to his mother in July 1946:

One of the Mess gardens has been most beautifully kept and you can lie there and forget the rest of Germany. The family who used to live in the house have kept it up to scratch: it is the doctor's house—he is a nice fellow and interesting to talk to ... The younger daughter aged 19 also would like to be a doctor, she doesn't think she will ever qualify as she is not good enough at the subjects that matter. I quite often meet them in the garden and natter to them, and I have been asked round to feed with them: that I had to refuse.<sup>180</sup>

This letter must, as he said: 'have rung alarm bells in my mother's mind; the very idea that I might have social rather than, say, master/slave relations with German civilians must have set them off, not to mention the suspicion that social might easily develop into sexual relations, as indeed they might.'<sup>181</sup> A month later he wrote to his mother to reassure her that she had nothing to worry about, while at the same time explaining that he had become bored with the all-male company and conversation in the officers' mess and found he had more in

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<sup>179</sup> IWM SA, Howard

<sup>180</sup> Howard, *Otherwise Occupied*, p133

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*, p148

common with 'a pleasant and intelligent German than a stupid and uncongenial Englishman'.<sup>182</sup>

The relationship continued and a few months later, in January 1947, Howard sent his parents photos, taken with a camera he had acquired in Germany. In the accompanying letter, as he commented later, he was 'at pains to reassure my parents that there was no romantic attachment, when it must have been plain to them that one was developing nevertheless'.<sup>183</sup> In his later memoir he emphasised the practical and social constraints upon them, such as his family's assumptions regarding acceptable behaviour within their social class, the need to achieve financial security before marriage, the 'unacceptable stigma in the society' in which his family moved of marrying a German, that 'pregnancy would mean marriage' and 'at once be interpreted as a naked attempt at entrapment'.<sup>184</sup> We were not, he wrote, 'in the grip of an entirely uncontrollable passion'.<sup>185</sup>

Soon after this exchange of letters, a new colonel was appointed to command the unit. As he brought his wife and family with him to Germany, he needed a larger house and decided to take the doctor's house for himself, ejecting the British officers and the doctor from his consulting rooms. Michael Howard's sympathies were now fully on the side of the German doctor and his family against his own colonel, whose behaviour he considered morally unacceptable. As he explained to his mother, the colonel was:

... quite incapable of understanding that in a country where there are only 230,000 houses for 6 million inhabitants, it literally is morally wrong for two people to occupy a 32 room house ... The Colonel was so childish as to ask me to try and prove that the doctor had been an ardent Nazi. When I told him that I knew the old boy quite well, and was quite certain that he had not been one, he was a bit taken aback ... The stupidity of it – no wonder the people get a bad impression of us.<sup>186</sup>

The matter spread to involve local politicians and trade unions in the town and opposition to the requisition antagonised relations between British and Germans, which had already started to deteriorate due to local protests at the continued low level of food rations. The dispute was eventually resolved by designating the house as offices for the Intelligence

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid, p147

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, p211

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, pp229-30

<sup>185</sup> Ibid

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, p262

Section, rather than living quarters, allowing the doctor to keep his consulting rooms, while the colonel found another house in a town eighteen miles away. This was, according to Howard, 'a blessing in disguise.'<sup>187</sup> His judgement on the colonel, whom he considered had 'learnt to dispense entirely with a moral sense of any sort', was devastating:

Trying to explain to him why something is 'right', or 'wrong' instead of 'a good thing' or 'a bad thing' is like trying to explain the colour of a sunset to a man who has been blind for fifteen years, and isn't interested in sunsets.<sup>188</sup>

Personal relationships in occupied Germany between male occupiers and female occupied are often discussed in physical terms, as prostitution and casual sex, liaisons and marriages of convenience, or, occasionally, as love at first sight followed by marriage. Howard's story shows the importance of another dimension: that of social constraints, moral judgements and a code of accepted behaviour, understood by both sides. Soon after his arrival he wrote to his parents that the destruction of German cities was 'much as it ought to be' and no more than the Germans deserved.<sup>189</sup> A year later, his personal relationship with, and sympathy for, a German family, led to his perception that it was not the defeated Germans, but the British colonel who breached the moral code.

Margret, the doctor's daughter, gained a place to read medicine at the University of Bonn and moved there in early October 1947. Howard went to visit her, before he left Germany in December, to take up his own university place at Cambridge:

It was unthinkable that I should leave Germany without saying goodbye to Margret in person, now in Bonn. At this stage I needed no pretext, fictitious or otherwise, to make the trip ... There was much sighing, some tears, many promises, promises to write, promises to meet again. We knew that neither of us would be deflected from our immediate aims, she to qualify as a doctor and I to get my degree and find financial independence. But there was still the prospect that I might spend a semester at the university in Bonn in the New Year, which we both knew would pose a serious threat to our standing as *demi-vierges*. In the event, we were to correspond, often and passionately ... We continued writing for most of two years, by which time, starved of actual face-to-face contact, our correspondence had assumed a calmer character. It has continued, as between friends, for sixty years.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid, p268

<sup>188</sup> Ibid, pp286-7

<sup>189</sup> See above p204

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, pp317-8

## Husbands and wives

Some personal relationships between British men and German women resulted in marriage. In total around ten thousand 'war brides' emigrated from Germany to the UK between 1947 and 1950.<sup>191</sup> These figures were slightly lower than the number of German war brides who went to the United States, although estimates vary.<sup>192</sup> Some war brides have published their memoirs<sup>193</sup> which describe extraordinary personal histories, but it is difficult to know how typical their experiences were. Fourteen war brides were interviewed by Inge Weber-Newth and Dieter Steinert, as part of a study of German immigration to Britain between 1947 and 1951.<sup>194</sup> In a later article, Weber-Newth presented a generally negative picture of their experiences, both in Germany and Britain, quoting a German charity, Caritas, that only a small number were content and stating that the interviews showed that unfavourable perceptions of their status as war brides 'remained a burden for many decades.'<sup>195</sup>

While acknowledging that 'the spectrum of relationships was diverse', Weber-Newth placed post-war occupation marriages in a context of social and cultural dislocation at the end of the war, claiming that 'Allied troops were not generally welcomed ... during the first few weeks a harsh regime was practised and the occupiers took what they saw as their rights as a victor', and corruption, sex and prostitution were inevitable in the circumstances.<sup>196</sup> The reasons the women interviewed for the study gave for marrying were generally practical, such as hope for improved material conditions, the higher status and better appearance of Allied soldiers, a desire to have a family and children and a concern that otherwise they might not be able to marry,<sup>197</sup> given the gender imbalance in post-war Germany.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Inge Weber-Newth, 'Bilateral relations: British Soldiers and German Women' in Louise Ryan & Wendy Webster (eds.), *Gendering Migration: Masculinity, Femininity and Ethnicity in Post-War Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p53; Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth, *Labour and Love. Deutsche in Grossbritannien nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Osnabrück: secolo Verlag, 2000), p7

<sup>192</sup> Goedde estimated, based on exit applications to travel to the US, that 14,175 German wives, six husbands and 750 children entered the US between 1947 and June 1950, plus another 1,862 entering the US as fiancés. Comparable figures for GI brides and grooms emigrating from Britain to the US were 34,944 wives, 53 husbands and 472 children, and from Japan, 758 wives (Goedde, *GIs and Germans*, pp100-1)

<sup>193</sup> Notably Gerda Erika Baker, *Shadow of War* (Oxford, Batavia, Sydney: Lion Publishing Ltd, 1990) and Renate Greenshields, *Lucky Girl Goodbye and its Sequel A Bit of Time*, (Hawkchurch Devon: Renate Greenshields, 2006)

<sup>194</sup> Steinert and Weber-Newth, *Labour and Love*

<sup>195</sup> Weber-Newth, 'Bilateral relations: British Soldiers and German Women', p61, p63

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, pp55-7

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, p62

<sup>198</sup> In 1946 there were 7,279,400 more women than men in Germany. In the age group between 20 and 45 there were 1,482 women for every 1,000 men. Out of every 100 Germans born in 1924, 25, mostly male, were dead or missing and a further 31 severely mutilated. See Michael Balfour and John Mair, *Four Power Control in Germany and Austria 1945-1946* (Oxford: Survey of International Affairs 1939-1946, Oxford University Press, 1956), p10



More recently, Isobel Schropper has conducted similar research among Austrian war brides. She discovered that the situation was similar in many ways but, despite a generally negative reaction in Austria to women who associated with British soldiers, significant barriers to marriage imposed by the British authorities and original expectations not being met when they arrived in Britain, the eighteen war brides she interviewed generally displayed more positive attitudes:

Irrespective of how difficult it was to deal with cultural differences, all the interviewees expressed pride in having overcome them and in having established their place in the families of their husbands.<sup>199</sup>

Given the similarities in the situation in Germany and Austria and the small samples considered, it is difficult to generalise from these results and claim that Austrian war brides were more content in Britain. It is more likely that both studies reflected individual differences among those interviewed. Some German and Austrian war brides settled in Britain and remained married for the rest of their lives. Others, unsurprisingly, found it difficult to cope with cultural differences and unmet expectations and returned home, separated or divorced.

Historical research on German and Austrian war brides has generally been conducted with wives rather than husbands, either because the research was conducted as part of a wider study of migration,<sup>200</sup> or because women were more likely to retain links with German or Austrian religious or cultural organisations, which made it possible to identify them later, but not husbands in cases where they had separated or divorced. Husbands were often older than their wives, died earlier and few are still alive, so there is limited scope for further interviews.<sup>201</sup> However, some conclusions can be drawn from contemporary records. British men were under very little practical or material pressure to marry.<sup>202</sup> Even if their girlfriends became pregnant, members of the occupying forces were under no legal obligation to marry the mother or provide financial support for illegitimate children.<sup>203</sup> It has to be assumed, therefore, that those who married did so for romantic reasons, to keep the woman they

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<sup>199</sup> Isobel Schropper, *Austrian female migration to Britain, 1945 to 1960* (PhD Diss: London, 2010)

<sup>200</sup> E.g. Steinert and Weber-Newth, *Labour and Love*

<sup>201</sup> Jan Thexton, whom I interviewed for this study in November 2007, died six months later.

<sup>202</sup> Weber-Newth, 'Bilateral relations: British Soldiers and German Women', p59

<sup>203</sup> FO 371/70845. In 1948 the Foreign Office, with the support of the Minister for Germany, Pakenham, considered proposals from the Society for the Unmarried Mother and her Child to allow civil claims, for paternity, maintenance and support for illegitimate children, to be pursued by German mothers in Control Commission courts in Germany. The proposals were dropped following objections from service chiefs.

loved, because they were encouraged or persuaded to do so by their girlfriends, or because it was in accordance with their moral and social understanding of correct behaviour, or a combination of all these reasons.

British men who decided to marry a German woman had to devote a considerable amount of time and effort before they received permission to do so. In addition to antagonism from some members of the local population and concerns or explicit disapproval expressed by parents or other family members on both sides, official regulations at first prohibited and then strongly discouraged marriage. Despite the relaxation of the non-fraternisation rules, marriage with 'ex-enemy aliens' was forbidden until 31 July 1946, when a government spokesman announced in the House of Lords that the ban would be relaxed, subject to certain criteria.<sup>204</sup>

Bureaucratic and legal obstacles had still to be overcome before the marriage could take place. Approval in each case was required from commanding officers. No marriage was permitted until six months after the date of application, during which time the man was required to return to the UK on leave, presumably intended as a cooling-off period. In addition, the prospective wife had to undergo a medical examination and receive a certificate of good health from a British medical officer, and a certificate of good character signed by the *Oberbürgermeister* or other suitable German official.<sup>205</sup> Prospective wives, and in some cases their families, were subject to security examinations and a 'list of certain categories of women considered politically undesirable for marriage' was compiled by the British authorities though not openly circulated.<sup>206</sup> Regulations and guidelines, issued by the British Control Commission for Austria for the administration of marriage policy, specified that it was 'the duty of the Commanding Officers to try and dissuade members of the forces from marriage overseas,' both for security reasons and in their own interest, by making them aware of cultural differences which could cause difficulties. In addition the regulations

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<sup>204</sup> FO 1030/174, copy of Hansard Vol.142, No. 126, 31 July 1946

<sup>205</sup> FO 1030/174, 'The conditions under which British Service men may marry German women in the British Zone of Germany'

<sup>206</sup> Ibid

specified that the proposed marriage had to be discussed with a religious chaplain, and the husband had to ensure that suitable accommodation would be available in Britain.<sup>207</sup>

Jan Thexton had great difficulty obtaining authorisation from his commander in Germany, a brigadier, who denied any knowledge of a change in the regulations and whose initial response has been described above.<sup>208</sup> Thexton went home to enlist the support of his MP, who agreed to help. On his return to Germany he found a big notice on his desk: 'Here is your authority to get married. God help you.' Having obtained authorisation from the British, he still had to obtain permission from the German authorities, before he and his wife could be married in a German registry office. When interviewed in 2007, he said that he had written an official notice of the correct procedure, which was circulated in the British Zone. He was told later that 'three thousand other couples married in that year [1947-8] ... based upon what I'd negotiated with the Germans.'<sup>209</sup>

Marriage with a former enemy alien was the ultimate symbol of acceptance and reconciliation, especially as this automatically meant the spouse acquired British nationality and the right to live in Britain. Personal relationships, both sexual and non-sexual, between British men and German women were common and widespread, but marriage was different, as this implied a long term commitment on both sides. It is worth noting that, for a small but significant number of British men in occupied Germany, such as Jan Thexton, meeting and arranging to marry their future wives was a deliberate decision that meant they had to overcome significant personal, bureaucratic and social obstacles, and which inevitably affected and changed their future lives as much, if not more, than anything else they did during and after the war. Rather than providing evidence of 'the breakdown of moral and cultural norms' in a society 'confronted with destruction, death and the flight of women and children for survival', as claimed by Weber-Newth,<sup>210</sup> the history of the 10,000 German and Austrian war brides who married British servicemen and members of the Control Commission shows the strength and persistence of social convention and moral standards. Despite the experience of the war and its aftermath, in the field of personal relationships,

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<sup>207</sup> FO 1020/683, quoted in Schopper, *Austrian female migration to Britain*, section 2.1.2.3, 'Marriage requirements.' Similar regulations applied in Germany.

<sup>208</sup> See above p226

<sup>209</sup> IWM SA, Thexton

<sup>210</sup> Weber-Newth, 'Bilateral relations: British Soldiers and German Women', p56

British and German individuals applied and expected similar standards of social and personal behaviour.

## 7.5 People like us?

*'But it was part of the normal scene almost, this constant movement of peoples and the feeling of the lost tribe almost.'*<sup>211</sup>

In contrast to their view of German civilians, the four young officers and IWM interviewees considered here increasingly perceived Russian soldiers, and Russian, Polish and other Eastern European Displaced Persons (DPs), unfavourably in terms of national stereotypes, despite the Soviet Union having fought on the same side as Britain in the war and the DPs having suffered as forced labourers under German rule. Whereas extensive contacts with the German civilian population on many different levels and in different contexts, at work, as neighbours, domestic servants, friends, lovers and potential marriage partners, resulted in their being perceived as individuals and 'people like us', lack of contact with Russian soldiers and Eastern European DPs contributed to their being perceived as socially and culturally different.

One IWM interviewee, for example, described the Russians in Berlin as 'fine fighting soldiers' but a 'very different sort of people from what we were.'<sup>212</sup> Similarly, initial sympathy for DPs as victims of Nazism was replaced with a perception of them as a problem. Although this view was often based on hearsay and rumour, there was no lack of circumstantial evidence which reinforced numerous stories of Russian soldiers and DPs looting, raping, stealing and murdering.<sup>213</sup> These post-war perceptions contributed to the development of a Cold War mentality, as they reinforced long-standing suspicions of Soviet intentions and more recent concerns about new communist regimes in Poland and Eastern Europe,

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<sup>211</sup> IWM SA, Palliser

<sup>212</sup> IWM SA, Martin Cosmo Hastings

<sup>213</sup> E.g., Report by Noel Annan on Displaced Persons in Pelly & Yasamee, *Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series 1*, pp43-47; FO 1056/1040, Goronwy Rees' tour diary

## Russian soldiers

In the closing stages of the war in Europe, it appeared to some British military units on the ground in Germany, with justification, that their movements were directed as much against a potential Russian threat, as against German military opposition which had already collapsed. Michael Palliser, for example, described how, when his battalion of Churchill tanks was dispersed around the countryside north of Hamburg, hoping to be sent to Denmark, which had a reputation of being something of a 'land of milk and honey,' another brigade 'came zooming through us one day, to our indignation, and zoomed on up to Denmark' in order to get there before the Russians.<sup>214</sup>

This was not an isolated occurrence. In the final days of the war, a number of British units raced to reach positions ahead of the Russians. In his history of T-Force, Sean Longden described how one unit, under the command of Major Tony Hibbert, was ordered on 1 May, shortly before VE Day, to advance urgently to the naval port of Kiel on the Baltic.<sup>215</sup> Hibbert later made enquiries as to where his orders had originated and discovered that, a month earlier, on 4 April 1945, a radio signal from the Japanese embassy in Stockholm to Tokyo had been intercepted, stating that the Russians intended to occupy Denmark. As a result, on 1 May, the same day that Hibbert was ordered to advance to Kiel, the Royal Navy received orders to enter Copenhagen harbour, which it did on 4 May, and British troops advanced to Wismar on the Baltic coast, twenty miles inside the area agreed as forming the Soviet Zone, arriving on 2 May just before the Russians.<sup>216</sup>

Throughout the Cold War, the idea that the British and Americans could, or should, have combined with Germany, their wartime enemy, against the Soviet Union, their former ally, was commonplace in West Germany, while British government officials were anxious to deny they had ever been sympathetic to the idea. When interviewed in 2010, Michael Palliser explained that in his view, tensions between the Allies at the end of the war could never have developed into open conflict, as British troops would have refused to fight with the Germans against the Soviet Union.<sup>217</sup> But if, as Palliser suggested, the attitude of the great majority of

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<sup>214</sup> IWM SA, Palliser

<sup>215</sup> Longden, *T-Force*, pp139-40; Tony Hibbert, *Operation Eclipse*, [<http://www.majorhibbertslog.co.uk/OPE00.html> accessed 1 July 2010]

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, p145

<sup>217</sup> IWM SA, Palliser

British troops towards their Russian allies was favourable during and immediately after the war, the situation changed quickly. When asked when he first became aware of increasing suspicion of the Russians, Palliser replied:

I think that within, I would say, two or three months it was quite clear that there were tensions. The Russians were making life more difficult and one kept getting stories of how they treated returning prisoners-of-war and there was a build-up of distrust of the Russians, which in a way ... I was in Berlin a year after, '46 rather than '45 ... there was undoubtedly a very powerful feeling of distrust of the Russians.<sup>218</sup>

The IWM interviewees who spoke of their encounters with Russian soldiers told a similar story, of a short period of friendly relations, followed by tensions soon after the war, consolidating over the next twelve months into a deep sense of suspicion and mistrust.

There was more contact between British and Russian soldiers in Berlin than elsewhere, but it was limited, hence the British saw and heard evidence of the behaviour of Russian soldiers, as dirty, drunk, looting and raping, without having sufficient personal contact to question these stereotypes or appreciate the Russian point of view. Four of the IWM interviewees were members of an advance party of British servicemen who went to Berlin in July 1945. The stories they told reflected the German population's image of the Russians and highlighted behaviour both British and Germans considered socially, culturally and morally reprehensible.

One IWM interviewee was the British officer responsible for security in the *Tiergarten*, the principal black market district of Berlin. He had been told that if they could work with the Russians in Berlin they could do so in the rest of Germany and Europe, but they never did. People would rush in to say that Russians were looting. On one occasion a man came in stark naked claiming that the Russians had stolen his clothes. They had to employ 1,000 Germans for a week, he continued, to clean the barracks they took over from the Russians. In the garages where they stayed there was a dead body in the cellar. All washbasins had been used as toilets.<sup>219</sup> One evening he saw a large number of Russian soldiers, men and women, with their ponies loaded with loot, singing songs which may have come from Central Asia: 'There was something ominous about it all.' Asked about the attitude of the Russian

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid

<sup>219</sup> IWM SA, Martin Cosmo Hastings

troops to the British, he said that on the whole it was very good. They wanted schnapps, and it didn't matter if it was real or petrol. Personally he had few connections with the Russians but when he came across them he found them very helpful.<sup>220</sup>

An NCO told a similar story: 'The Russians behaved appallingly.' All the stories of soldiers with watches up their arms were quite true. He saw that dozens of times. Also 'pulling standard lamps out of a house and wondering why they wouldn't work.' Leaving a cinema one night, he walked straight into rifle fire where British troops were firing at Russians. When they first arrived in Berlin the troops were meant to stay in the Olympic Stadium, but it was uninhabitable. Two Olympic pools had been used as latrines. Statues had their heads knocked off and cupboards were reduced to matchwood. For the first two to three weeks, the British soldiers slept in lorries at the back of the stadium. In general, he said 'It must have been terrible for the Germans – without a doubt ... Like the Vikings, plunder, pillage and rape.' Asked about the attitude of the Russians to the British troops he replied that it was cautious. The ordinary soldiers didn't mix with each other and there was no organised contact.<sup>221</sup>

The evidence examined for this study indicates that most British people in Germany had little contact with Russian soldiers. After an initial period of friendly relations, they adopted the stereotypes prevalent at the time among the German population, as these views were generally in accordance with their own preconceptions and were confirmed by the negative experiences of those who did encounter Russian troops, especially in Berlin.

### **Displaced Persons**

At the end of the war it has been estimated there were around 10.8 million DPs in the area of the former German Reich, plus occupied parts of France and Belgium,<sup>222</sup> but this number reduced rapidly over the next twelve months to less than 400,000 in the British Zone.<sup>223</sup> At the end of September 1945, it was estimated that the number in the western zones was between 1.2 and 1.4 million,<sup>224</sup> including 825,000 Poles, 100,000 Ukrainians and 188,000

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid

<sup>221</sup> IWM SA, Chambers

<sup>222</sup> Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum Heimatlosen Ausländer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), p41

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, p41, p60

<sup>224</sup> Ibid, p83

from the Baltic States.<sup>225</sup> Around 600,000 DPs were accommodated in each of the US and British zones, and 100,000 in the French zone.<sup>226</sup> Numbers then declined more gradually to 365,872 in the British Zone in June 1946,<sup>227</sup> and 217,725 in August 1947.<sup>228</sup>

Official policy and planning for DPs conducted during the war by SHAEF, the combined US and British Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force, was based on the assumption that liberated DPs would wish to return home as soon as possible, but would be amenable to staying in temporary 'Assembly Centres' for a short period while travel arrangements were made.<sup>229</sup> Once Displaced Persons were accommodated in camps, the British occupiers had little contact with them, except when required to resolve a dispute or conflict. From September 1945, most DPs in the British Zone were Poles who refused to return following reports of poor living conditions in Poland under communist rule. Some feared enlistment in the Polish army or of being treated as collaborators. Others, originally from the east of the country, were concerned that their former homes were now under Russian control and part of the Soviet Union.<sup>230</sup>

In a pioneering study, Wolfgang Jacobmeyer claimed that the perception of DPs by American and British occupation forces was misinformed and based on inaccurate stereotypes.<sup>231</sup> In a study of crime statistics for Bremen from May to November 1945, he showed that the crime rate among the DP population, 2.03% including minor offences, was roughly similar to that among the German populations of other major cities at the same time. This was much higher than in 1928 but, as Jacobmeyer argued, comparison with a pre-war norm was not appropriate for post-war crime rates as most crimes in Germany in 1945 and 1946, whether committed by DPs or the local population, were related to obtaining food and a consequence of the economic conditions at the time.<sup>232</sup> However, figures for Bremen may not be typical of the rest of the country. Records of crimes tried at the British Military Government High Court in Hamburg, 22 June 1945 to 31 March 1947, tend to support the

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<sup>225</sup> Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*, p130

<sup>226</sup> Ibid

<sup>227</sup> Ibid

<sup>228</sup> Jacobmeyer, *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum Heimatlosen Ausländer*, p185, p224. Despite schemes promoted by the IRO (International Refugee Organisation) for DPs to emigrate to the US, Australia, Canada, Great Britain and Israel, there were still 100,000 DPs living in Germany three years later in 1950, including 64,000 in the British zone, when their status was officially changed from 'Displaced Persons' to '*Heimatlosen Ausländer*' (Homeless Foreigners).

<sup>229</sup> Ibid, p25

<sup>230</sup> Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*, p130

<sup>231</sup> Jacobmeyer, *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum Heimatlosen Ausländer*, p15

<sup>232</sup> Jacobmeyer, *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum Heimatlosen Ausländer*, pp48-9



anecdotal evidence from contemporary observers of a high crime rate among DPs. Over 25% of those accused were Polish, Russian or Eastern European. Of the nine people sentenced to death, eight were Polish and one German.<sup>233</sup>

Of those considered in this chapter, three of the four young officers and five of the twenty-one IWM interviewees spoke of contacts with DPs, in all cases referring to them as potential sources of trouble, but not without sympathy. Initially the predominant image was of the constant movement of people, both Germans and other nationalities, as if, as one commentator described it, a giant ant-heap had been disturbed.<sup>234</sup> Michael Palliser referred to it as 'part of the normal scene ... the feeling of the lost tribe almost.'<sup>235</sup>

Michael Howard described how one of his colleagues, a British officer, was killed by a 'marauding band of DPs'. His colleague was taking his German girlfriend home when they were flagged down by a German woman, who told them that 'drunken Polish DPs were ransacking the farm where she lived.' He drove to the farm but was shot dead. His girlfriend managed to get into the driving seat of the car and return to the town. The Polish DPs were later captured by a platoon of British soldiers, tried and condemned to death by firing squad.<sup>236</sup> Howard was not unsympathetic towards DPs as individuals, though critical of the Soviet and Polish governments, whom he blamed for the DPs' unwillingness to go home. He explained that Belgians, Dutch and French returned home very quickly, as did Russian DPs, although those who had been captured in the fighting were 'seen as cowards, collaborators and traitors' by the Soviet government and 'many were eliminated on return.' By the end of 1946, he wrote, the great majority of those remaining were Poles and 'the DP problem had effectively become a Polish DP problem.'<sup>237</sup>

The US soldier and commentator, Saul Padover, has suggested that Germans blamed Eastern European DPs whenever a crime had been committed and US soldiers believed them, though everyone plundered at that time, including US soldiers and German civilians. Padover added that Goebbels would be 'laughing up his sleeve' at this 'final triumph of his

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<sup>233</sup> FO 1060/2793, Register of Military Government Court, High Court in Hamburg

<sup>234</sup> Yvone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle* (London: Macmillan, 1959), p190

<sup>235</sup> IWM SA, Palliser

<sup>236</sup> Howard, *Otherwise Occupied*, pp119-120

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid*, pp118-9

propaganda'.<sup>238</sup> This explanation is not satisfactory, as, initially at least, British (and US) soldiers had no reason to believe the Germans rather than the DPs; everything they had been told during the war encouraged them to see DPs favourably, as representatives of Allied nations and victims of the Germans who deserved their sympathy. In addition, as the examples quoted above from the young British officers and IWM interviewees show, they were not as naïve as Padover suggested. In the absence of any functioning German police at the end of the war, the occupation forces investigated and resolved many cases themselves and were not necessarily dependent on second hand reports from the local population.

Jacobmeyer suggested a different explanation for the US and British Allies placing an exaggerated emphasis on crime committed by DPs: that they were disappointed at the lack of gratitude shown by DPs for their liberation and surprised that they of all people should resort to crime.<sup>239</sup> This explanation is not satisfactory either. The occupation forces may at times have felt that DPs were not suitably grateful for what they believed had been done for them, but this view did not necessarily lead to a perception of them as criminals. It could be argued that they expected DPs, as oppressed slave labourers, to take revenge against their former masters and that a high level of crime was therefore, initially at least, understandable and unsurprising. For example, as General Templer wrote in the *British Zone Review*, about the chaos of 'The Early Days':

Over this grim scene there swarmed a milling mass of displaced persons, drunk with liberation and in some cases alcohol, looting, raping and killing. Considering the history of the past five years, this was not surprising.<sup>240</sup>

If revenge attacks by DPs were to be expected, the British occupiers found the reluctance among some DPs to return home more surprising. Their assumption, based on everything they had been told during the war, was that liberated slave labourers from countries invaded by the Nazis would wish to return home as soon as possible, as many did. The British had entered the war to defend the independence of Poland. After the fall of France they fought to defend themselves, but as the threat of invasion receded they, with their US Allies, believed

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<sup>238</sup> Quoted in Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*, p42. Padover left Germany soon after VE Day and was referring to the period before the end of the war (when Goebbels was still alive).

<sup>239</sup> Jacobmeyer, *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum Heimatlosen Ausländer*, p50. 'Criminality by DPs appeared, in the judgement of the Allies, not only as pure disobedience but, worse still, as malicious ingratitude.'

<sup>240</sup> 'The Early Days', *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, No.4, Nov. 1945, p1

they were fighting a crusade to liberate the rest of Europe from their Nazi oppressors. Once this had been achieved, the reluctance of some DPs to return home raised difficult questions. Was a country truly liberated if the people who had lived there before the war did not want to return? Or were the DPs reluctant to return because they were collaborators who had volunteered to work in Germany rather than being forced to do so, in which case did they deserve favourable treatment? The British perception of DPs depended on their nationality. Rather than seeing all as victims of Nazi oppression, the greatest criticism was focussed on the 'Poles and Russians',<sup>241</sup> as they were the most reluctant to return home.<sup>242</sup>

By the end of 1945, the remaining DPs were mostly Polish and did not want to return home to a country now under communist control. In these circumstances, both sympathy for DPs, and a perception that they represented a problem that needed to be controlled, served to reinforce Cold War attitudes. As DPs were kept isolated in camps, often in poor conditions and unable to obtain work, encounters between British occupying forces and DPs were limited and, when they occurred, were often in difficult circumstances of confrontation and dispute. DPs therefore came to be perceived as troublemakers and were stereotyped as members of a national group, Poles or Russians, that did not observe accepted standards of behaviour. At the same time, sympathy with the difficulties experienced by individual DPs served to reinforce a Cold War perception of communist governments in the Soviet Union and Poland as oppressive regimes, that did not share the same values or abide by the same standards as those the British believed were typical of their own 'civilised' behaviour.

## 7.6 Conclusion

The four young officers discussed in depth in this chapter, together with the twenty young men and one woman interviewed for the Imperial War Museum Sound Archive whose views are also considered here, were highly diverse. They came from varied family and

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<sup>241</sup> When British reports spoke of criminality among DPs, this was often qualified by reference to 'Poles and Russians', e.g. Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government*, p357. See also FO 1056/540, Goronwy Rees' Tour Diary for 1 July 1945, in which he wrote that: 'displaced persons, especially Russians and Poles, are able to roam the country at will, raiding isolated farms or houses for food, valuables or women.'

<sup>242</sup> Citizens of the former Baltic States were an exception, as they were regarded favourably by the British despite their unwillingness to return home. This can be explained by their being considered to be victims of Russian aggression, at a time when the Russians were allies of Nazi Germany. Around 190,000 Baltic DPs in the US and British zones were exempted from forcible repatriation earlier than other Soviet citizens, on the grounds that the Western Allies did not recognise the Russian annexation of the Baltic States in 1940. See Steinert and Weber-Newth, *European Immigrants in Britain*, p142

educational backgrounds and performed a wide range of tasks in occupied Germany, to which they brought diverse experiences, attitudes and prejudices. Although they cannot be categorised as a 'strong generation', sharing a common understanding of significant historical events, they formed a 'weak generation', or age cohort, with one important characteristic: all had little, if any, adult experience other than war and had to adapt to an entirely new and unfamiliar situation in a strange country. Some had to deal with people from several different national cultures: Americans, French, Poles and Russians, as well as Germans. Most found themselves in Germany because their units were stationed there at the end of the war. Instead of returning home, they had to stay for at least twelve months until they were demobilised. Some were simply glad to be alive, some took advantage of the opportunity to enjoy themselves and a few, including Howard and Chaloner, were given important jobs with responsibilities far in excess of what was usual at their age.

Unlike their senior officers, the majority of those considered, with a few significant exceptions, did not explicitly mention the evidence of death and destruction they saw around them, regardless of whether this was due to Allied bombing campaigns and the land battles at the end of the war, or to war crimes and atrocities committed by Germans in concentration camps or elsewhere. Their overwhelming concern, reflected both in their work and their personal relationships, was not to look back on the horrors of the past, but forward to the future, uncertain as this was. It could be argued that Hannah Arendt's reference to the 'absence of mourning for the dead', that 'nowhere is this nightmare of destruction and horror less felt and less talked about than in Germany itself'<sup>243</sup> applied at least to some of the British as well as to defeated and apathetic Germans.

Two other themes noted previously as characteristic of the senior officers were also absent from the reactions of those considered in this chapter. There were no 'echoes of Empire' or references to the Imperial ideals of trusteeship and service which were so prominent among the older generation, though Howard was born in Fiji, where his father was a colonial administrator, Thexton spent his early childhood in Bermuda and three of the IWM interviewees had served in India during the war and one in Africa. The only exception was a comment by Michael Palliser, (whose maternal grandfather had worked as a naval engineer

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<sup>243</sup> Hannah Arendt, 'The Aftermath of Nazi Rule: Report from Germany', *Commentary*, No.10, October 1950, p342

in South Africa and Australia). When asked about the overall aims of the occupation, Palliser replied that there was: 'a rather British feeling, semi-colonial in a way ... [to] ensure the colony worked well,' but he described this as a 'post-colonial atmosphere' suggesting a perception of the end of Empire, rather than its heyday.<sup>244</sup>

Similarly, there was no evidence of the 'missionary idealism' or the exhortations to 'save the soul of Germany' and 'rebuild civilisation' expressed by Montgomery and Robertson in their speeches and broadcasts. With the exception of two conscientious objectors, religious faith or belief was not mentioned in interviews or considered relevant to their time in Germany. Ironically, personal idealism and moral principles were most in evidence when they acted in opposition to official Military Government policy, as in Howard's determination to continue to secure material from Germany to assist British economic recovery and Chaloner's belief in the need to create a free press, independent of government.

The overwhelming concern of these young people was their personal welfare and their future. They were not rebels. They were in no doubt that the war had been just and necessary. They were pragmatic, accepted orders and worked hard when required. But now the war was over, individual goals were more important than collective aims. In the absence of any serious resistance from the German population, personal relations became as, if not more, important than their work.

All four young officers, and seventeen of the twenty-one IWM interviewees, spoke of contacts with the local German population. These ranged from meeting people through work or as neighbours, providing goods and services, leisure activities such as going to the theatre, concerts or the cinema, to girlfriends, casual sex and marriage. Through making personal contact, they came to see Germans as individuals, rather than collectively as the enemy. This perception went further than making a black and white distinction between 'good' Germans who had opposed and 'bad' Germans who had supported the Nazi regime. The Germans they met and spoke to appeared to share the same values as they did, of respect for life and property, self-control and respect for authority. Michael Howard found he had more in common with 'a pleasant and intelligent German than a stupid and uncongenial

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<sup>244</sup> IWM SA, Palliser

Englishman' and sided with a German doctor in a dispute over the use of his house, against his own colonel and commanding officer who, in his view, displayed a lack of 'moral sense of any sort.'<sup>245</sup> Some collective prejudices remained, but wartime stereotypes of Germans as militaristic, aggressive and brutal, were replaced with others that reflected their status as a defeated nation, such as apathetic, self-pitying and unconcerned for others.

In contrast with the German population, personal contacts with Russian soldiers and Displaced Persons were very limited and, from September 1945, nearly always in circumstances of conflict. Jacobmeyer has written of the alienation of DPs from the German population once they were gathered together in camps and claimed this contributed to a perception of them as 'the enemy.'<sup>246</sup> It appears that a similar process applied to the British occupiers. The policy of internment in camps and the lack of direct personal contact led to a collective, and often incorrect, perception of Russian soldiers and those DPs who remained after September 1945 as drunken, criminal troublemakers, who did not observe accepted standards of behaviour and had no respect for 'civilised' values, such as respect for life and property, personal cleanliness and self-control.

Despite their differences, both senior and younger officers were more concerned with the future than the past, which led them to focus on reconstruction rather than restitution and reparations. The senior officers understood their role to be the restoration of order and the prevention of disease and social unrest, which presupposed a reasonably effective civil administration and a functioning economy. With a few exceptions such as Chaloner and Howard, the younger generation was not motivated by the same ideological concerns as their seniors, nor did they respond to the end of the war by seeking revenge, or justice. Facing an uncertain future, in the interlude between the end of the war and returning home, they started to adjust to a peacetime mentality and rebuild their lives. Through personal contacts, at work and in their leisure time, they became reconciled to their former enemies, cooperated willingly on the task of reconstruction and found no difficulty working with Germans they came to see as individuals and 'people like us.'

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<sup>245</sup> Howard, *Otherwise Occupied*, p287

<sup>246</sup> Jacobmeyer, *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum Heimatlosen Ausländer*, p52

These changes were reflected in the personal histories of all four of the young officers considered here. Although this period was a brief interlude, it was also a formative influence on the rest of their lives. John Chaloner created a new magazine, *Der Spiegel*, as a model for a free press, independent of government. Having succeeded, he found his new magazine could survive without him and, in time, become more financially successful and politically influential than any equivalent British publication. Michael Palliser, who said he understood the army of occupation was there in case there was any trouble with the Germans, and 'to make sure Germany was not in a position to do it again', became a convinced European and spent much of his later working life negotiating British entry to the European Community. Jan Thexton, who accepted a job with the Control Commission because he believed he was too old to return to accountancy, whose strongest memories of his time in Germany were 'just getting to know the Germans', and who met and married his wife in Germany, changed jobs from compiling lists of equipment for reparations, to procuring supplies for the occupation forces from the German economy, and then to promoting sales of British weapons and equipment to the newly formed German armed forces. Michael Howard, whose role was to exact as much as possible in reparations from Germany, found that, by the time he was due to leave, he was out of step with official policy. Over 60 years later, he still claimed that the contribution he and his unit made to assist British economic recovery had never been properly recognised. Shortly before he left Germany, he exchanged fond farewells with a girl he had met through his work, and they stayed in touch, as friends, for over 60 years.

## 8 Conclusion

This thesis explores what twelve important and influential British individuals aimed to achieve in occupied Germany, and why, and how this changed over time. In so doing it aims to contribute to a better understanding of the motivation of the 'governing elite' of leading British officials and administrators in the first three years after the war ended in May 1945, and explain why British policies changed rapidly from conflict to cooperation, from the 'Four Ds' agreed at Potsdam to a more positive policy, which I have described as the 'Three Rs' of physical and economic Reconstruction, political Renewal and personal Reconciliation.

### Diversity

The biographical approach adopted highlights the diversity of aims and intentions among British people in Germany, which varied according to their age and experience, roles and responsibilities, political and religious beliefs. This diversity helps to explain some of the apparent contradictions in British policy, such as the combination of pragmatism and idealism, economic constraints with attempts to promote reconstruction, and the parallel worlds of occupier and occupied living apart with examples of intense engagement. Mary Fulbrook has noted in her book, *Dissonant Lives*,<sup>1</sup> that to describe patterns of behaviour in dichotomous terms, such as 'coercion vs consent', 'misses the complexities surrounding different degrees of constraints and a related sense of agency.'<sup>2</sup> Similarly, it appears from the evidence collected for this study that generalised descriptions of British policy and actions, which do not account for diversity of attitudes and behaviour, are at best an oversimplification and at worst a distortion. For example, the occupation cannot be characterised simply as 'pragmatic' or 'idealistic', or as 'isolated' or 'integrated' with the local population. The reality was more complex.

While Montgomery, Robertson and their senior colleagues accepted and implemented the Potsdam decisions to disarm, demilitarise and denazify Germany, they perceived these tasks as relatively straightforward, compared with the far more difficult work of creating order out of chaos and promoting an economically viable, stable democracy. A policy of economic reconstruction, to be followed by political renewal, was outlined as early as September 1945

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and violence through the German dictatorships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p477



in a new Directive of Military Government, prepared by Montgomery, Robertson and their colleagues at the highest level of Military Government, at a time when the Foreign Office had no formal responsibility for internal affairs within the British Zone and the new Labour Government had only recently assumed office. In 1946 the Foreign Office played a significant part in accelerating the process of devolution of power to local German administrations, but the process had already been foreshadowed in Montgomery's memos a year earlier, and implementation started before the end of 1945, with the creation of nominated representative councils, licensing of political parties and preparations for democratic elections.

The three army generals, Montgomery, Robertson, and Bishop, were concerned to restore order from chaos, prevent unrest, and more generally, preserve the established social order, as this was in their own interest as members of a professional British establishment that had gained its wealth and social position from public service at home and in the empire, in the army, in government positions, in business, or through inheriting landed estates. They justified a policy of reconstruction through reference to the need to 'rebuild civilisation' after the destruction of war, missionary ideals of 'saving the soul of Germany', and paternalistic notions of imperial trusteeship, caring for a nation until the inhabitants were, in their view, mature enough to take responsibility for government. After leaving Germany, they were able to present a self-congratulatory account of humane and benign British policies, which had contributed to a peaceful and economically prosperous Federal Republic. Sholto Douglas was the exception among this group. He hated his time in Germany, was pragmatic rather than idealistic, and troubled by personal issues, such as being instructed to confirm the death penalty on Goering, and allegations of corruption made in the British press.

The partial and self-congratulatory account of the army generals can be qualified by examining the histories of other British individuals, who also played an important and influential role in occupied Germany. The four civilian administrators were a very diverse group with little in common, despite all working in different ways to promote their conception of democracy in Germany. Ingrams' background was similar to that of the army generals. He was influenced by his religious beliefs and experience of imperial administration. Despite some early success in establishing nominated representative councils, his attempt to model

political renewal in Germany on antiquated notions of British 'parish pump' democracy encountered strong resistance from leading German politicians and some of his British colleagues. The two committed international socialists, Albu and Flanders, left Germany at the end of 1947, disappointed that their achievements had not matched early hopes of establishing a 'positive socialist policy' in Germany. Their socialist colleague, Berry, was apparently more successful in Hamburg, though his aims were more modest. Heavily influenced by his experience as a district administrator during the occupation of the Rhineland after the First World War, he supported the newly elected SPD administration in Hamburg led by the former exile Max Brauer, promoted the interests of the city, established good working relations between British and German officials, and in so doing defused potential conflicts and preserved British interests, which he perceived as similar to those of the city: stability, economic reconstruction, personal reconciliation, and the maintenance of good relations with the city's business and political elite. As Frances Rosenfeld has shown, both sides were proud of this at the time, but reconciliation was achieved at the cost of ignoring difficult issues, such as the city's Nazi past, and its destruction by Allied bombing.

The four young men with no adult experience but war were concerned above all for their own welfare and personal future. In two cases, Howard and Chaloner, they decided to act on their own initiative, even when this ran counter to official policy. They were not motivated by religious beliefs or ideals of service to the British Empire, and appeared unaware of exhortations from the generals at the top of the administration to 'rebuild civilisation' or 'save the soul of Germany'. Nevertheless, all four were conscientious, worked long hours when required, and did not question the aims of the occupation, or the policies of economic reconstruction, political renewal and personal reconciliation. Inevitably, as young men, they had greater involvement with Germans than their senior officers, both through their work and socially. Personal contacts of all kinds, including friendships and sexual relations with German women, and in Thexton's case, marriage, led them to see Germans as 'people like us', rather than in terms of the stereotypes prevalent during the war.

### **Partial truths**

Many earlier claims by historians regarding British policy in occupied Germany appear to be partial truths that reflect some aspects of the situation, but not all. For example, some have

argued that the principal motivation underlying British policy was security: the need to disarm Germany and memories of the failure of appeasement after the First World War.<sup>3</sup> Although this was true of many in Britain, such as Brigadier Morgan and the Parliamentary Post-War Planning group,<sup>4</sup> security concerns were not especially prominent among the individuals researched for this study. Based on their personal experience of the scale of destruction, the lack of resistance and a generally positive attitude of the Germans towards the British, they considered there was little threat in the foreseeable future. Though aware that this might change in future, they did not draw the conclusion that a harsh occupation was required, either to extract reparations or to limit and control German economic activities indefinitely.

The post-war period was experienced by most Germans as a time of great hardship, not surprisingly in view of widespread hunger, outbreaks of disease, overcrowded accommodation and an uncertain future, but this was not, as some Germans claimed at the time, the result of deliberate British policy. The British tried to ameliorate the worst effects of war and twelve years of Nazi rule, through securing imports of wheat, repairing the transport infrastructure and reviving the economy. The lessons both Robertson and Berry drew from their personal experience of the Rhineland occupation, were not only that appeasement had failed in the 1930s, but also that they had failed to support German democrats in the 1920s, and that, through inflicting unnecessarily harsh terms in the peace settlement of 1919, they and their Allies had helped create the economic and social conditions which made it possible for Hitler to seize power in 1933. As Military Governors, Robertson and Montgomery emphasised the positive aspects of their policy of promoting reconstruction and giving Germans 'hope for the future', rather than the negative aspects of disarmament, denazification and economic controls.

A popular view of the occupation, widely held in Germany, was that the British were motivated by commercial competition and wished to gain economic benefits from the occupation. This was later denied by many senior British figures.<sup>5</sup> The history of T-Force, and Michael Howard's claims that the value of reparations to the British economy was much greater than officially acknowledged, show that there was some truth in these allegations,

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<sup>3</sup> Turner, *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany*, pp4-5; Judt, *Postwar*, p100

<sup>4</sup> Morgan, *Assize of Arms*; Weymouth, *Germany: Disease and Treatment*

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Cairncross, *The Price of War*, p75; Balfour & Mair, *Four Power Control in Germany*, p29

but the British Zone proved to be an economic liability, not an asset that could be exploited. After a brief idealistic phase lasting until the end of 1945, the most important economic factor affecting British policy and actions was the perceived need to reduce the cost of the occupation. This perception in turn reinforced a policy of promoting German economic revival, to generate exports of manufactured goods to pay for the import of raw materials, especially food, subsidised by the British taxpayer.

The reactions of those discussed in this study to the Holocaust and other atrocities committed by Germans were similarly complex. According to Mass Observation reports, British attitudes towards Germany reached a low point at the end of the Second World War, following press reports of the liberation of the concentration camps,<sup>6</sup> but this was not necessarily typical of British soldiers in Germany and did not prevent them from having good relations with the local inhabitants. Palliser reported that he and his colleagues were not surprised by reports of 'horrific atrocities'. They considered this 'typically German' and 'were almost beyond being surprised by anything',<sup>7</sup> but still had friendly relations with the owners of the house where they were billeted. Chaloner was the only one of the twelve who was present at the liberation of a concentration camp. According to his sister, the experience affected him deeply, but he never spoke of it, except in private family conversations, and indirectly in a later novel. The experience did not prevent him, or his two Jewish staff-sergeants, Bohrer and Ormond, from working closely with a team of young German journalists to create *Der Spiegel*. Some British soldiers were motivated, at times, by a desire for revenge, but this was not typical and was officially discouraged. A more common response, typified by Montgomery, was to generalise the issues of war crimes and the Holocaust and speak of the need to 'restore civilisation', or refer, as did the *British Zone Review* in October 1945 and Chaloner later in private conversations with his sister, to 'man's inhumanity to man.'

### **Common assumptions**

Despite diversity among those considered in this study, it is possible to identify a number of assumptions shared by all. The most significant of these was the aim of preventing another war. This was rarely stated explicitly but always assumed. All agreed that the greatest failure

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<sup>6</sup> Kertesz, *The Enemy – British images of the German People*, p178

<sup>7</sup> See above p208

of the peace settlement in 1919 was that it had not prevented a Second World War. 'Winning the Peace' meant that, this time, there would be no more war.<sup>8</sup>

A second assumption was that the war had been caused by German aggression, and that it was essential to prevent the Nazi Party and former Nazis from achieving political power again. But, while there was general agreement on the aim, there was no consensus about how this could best be achieved. The socialist view, held by Albu and Flanders, was that the Nazi Party had achieved power through the support of the armed forces, landowners and industrialists, and it was necessary to remove their political influence in Germany through demilitarisation, land reform, and the socialisation of industry. However, many of the most senior members of British Military Government were landowners, or had worked in business, and could not be expected to subscribe to these views. Montgomery's family held land in Ireland. Robertson had managed a factory for Dunlop in South Africa. They found it easier to think in terms of a population led astray by their leaders, or a group of evil men who had to be removed from power. Once this had been done, they hoped the German people would learn to live in peace with their neighbours.

Perhaps surprisingly, an anti-Russian, anti-communist consensus was shared by all, regardless of their political principles. Over time four distinct issues combined to form the prevalent and near universal Cold War mentality of the 1950s and 1960s. Firstly, long-standing concerns about Russia as a possible threat to the British Empire, expressed most clearly by Montgomery.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, a fear of communism among the professional middle classes, typified by Bishop, as a social and political ideology that could spread, like a disease, across Europe, create difficulties in the administration of Germany and possibly threaten their social position at home in Britain. The two socialists, Albu and Flanders, did not share this view but were equally opposed to Russian communism for a third set of reasons, which dated back to the conflicts between socialists and communists in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. These came to a head in the Fusion campaign in Berlin in early 1946, when Albu compared communist 'totalitarian' tactics with those of the Nazis. Fourthly,

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<sup>8</sup> E.g. FO 1030/329, 'Verbatim notes of speech by Deputy Military Governor [Robertson] to Staff', 31 July 1947: 'What is our object in being here? It is often forgotten and often misunderstood ... Our object here in Germany is to create such conditions as shall be conducive for peace in Germany and Europe and hence the world.'

<sup>9</sup> Eg in his memo of 1 May 1946, that if conditions did not improve Germans would 'begin to look East' and this would comprise a 'definite menace to the British Empire.'

changing perceptions of Russian soldiers and Polish Displaced Persons reinforced anti-Russian and anti-communist prejudices. Accounts by British personnel, including by Palliser, Howard and IWM interviewees, show that DPs were viewed sympathetically by many British personnel who came into contact with them, but at the same time they were perceived to be culturally different and not 'people like us'. Alternatively, as part of a different but complementary narrative, DPs were described as 'gallant allies' whose reluctance to return home confirmed a negative view of life under communism in Poland and the Soviet Union. By the end of the period examined, 'winning the peace' had come to mean resisting Russian communism, as much as preventing a revival of Nazism within Germany.

A further assumption shared by all was that, as the occupying power, the British had an obligation to maintain the basic functions of government in their zone of occupation and care for the welfare of the inhabitants. This meant they had to preserve life, prevent hunger and disease, maintain law and order and provide opportunities for employment, thereby preventing idleness and resulting discontent. These paternalistic notions were expressed most explicitly by those who had worked in the Empire, such as Montgomery, Robertson, Bishop and Ingrams, but were shared to some degree by all. Similar ideals, together with a sense of duty and personal obligation, were promoted in the English public schools<sup>10</sup> and may have influenced those who had not worked in the Empire. All but two of the twelve individuals discussed in this study received a public school education.<sup>11</sup>

All twelve believed that Britain was and would continue to be a great power in Europe and in the world.<sup>12</sup> They gave no indication that they thought they were representatives of a power in decline. Although they understood that Britain lacked economic resources, this was to be expected after a long and difficult war. Even Albu, who before the war had voted for an anti-imperialist candidate and advocated the creation of a socialist community of nations, had been brought up on the adventure stories of Kipling, G.A. Henty and Captain Marryat.<sup>13</sup> The attitudes I have described as 'echoes of empire' and 'missionary idealism' were most prevalent among the older generation of army officers, such as Montgomery, Robertson and

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<sup>10</sup> Noel Annan, *Our Age: Portrait of a Generation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), pp37ff

<sup>11</sup> The exceptions were Chaloner and Thexton. Chaloner would have been exposed to similar ideas at Sandhurst.

<sup>12</sup> With the possible exception of Flanders. The Socialist Vanguard Group supported independence for India and were opposed to Empire, on the basis that they believed in self-determination and objected to exploitation in any form.

<sup>13</sup> Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, p1.2, p2.1. Albu also wrote that he was given the name Austen after Austen Chamberlain, because his parents admired his brother, the liberal imperialist Joseph Chamberlain.<sup>13</sup>

Bishop, and former colonial administrators such as Ingrams. In their cases, direct parallels can be observed between their experiences in the Empire and policy and practices in occupied Germany. Imperial attitudes were less apparent among the socialist civilian administrators, Albu, Flanders and Berry, or the younger generation of officers, although Palliser, Thexton and Howard all had fathers who had worked overseas, in the navy, Bermuda and Fiji.

All agreed that Britain should not have to bear the cost of the occupation. Early idealistic notions that the British would stay in Germany for twenty-five years and do whatever was necessary to prevent another war, were soon superseded by the requirement imposed from London that the cost to the British taxpayer had to be reduced. From early 1946 onwards, all those considered in this study accepted that British involvement in Germany would be temporary and had to be progressively scaled back.<sup>14</sup> This implied that new social and political structures could not be imposed against the will of the Germans, as any reforms could be reversed once the British left. Even Ingrams accepted that he had to obtain agreement from the 'German Working Party' to his proposed changes to electoral procedure. Once Ordinance 57 devolved responsibility to local German administrations, British scope to implement any structural change was further reduced. British policy was limited to giving the Germans space to make their own decisions and reform their own institutions, while the British retained the power of veto, offering guidance and advice, but not imposing an alien model of government upon reluctant Germans.

### **Aims and intentions and how these changed over time**

Although much of the evidence presented in this study was subjective, reflecting the perceptions of the twelve individuals researched, as recorded at the time in contemporary documents and in later memoirs and oral history interviews, some very broad generalisations can be made regarding British aims and policy in occupied Germany, on the basis of this study of twelve individuals. They all responded pragmatically to the chaos and destruction they saw around them, while the generals at the top of the administration justified a policy of taking active measures, rather than sitting back and doing nothing, in idealistic terms. Only a minority wanted to change fundamentally the structure of German social and political

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<sup>14</sup> With some reluctance in the case of Ingrams

institutions. All, including those who had hoped for a revolution within Germany to overthrow Hitler, now considered it essential to keep the peace, maintain law and order, control disease and provide employment, as they believed a stable, peaceful and democratic Germany was in Britain's national interest and in their own interest as members of a professional middle class. They worked to restore what they understood to be representative and responsible government by Germans, initially at local level and later regionally.

A deliberate policy of personal reconciliation followed later, in 1947, after numerous individual encounters at all levels between British and Germans had started to build trust and mutual respect. Examples given in this thesis include tributes paid by leading CDU politicians, Konrad Adenauer and Karl Arnold, to Robertson and Bishop respectively, the close working relationship between Berry and Brauer, the connections Albu and Flanders had with their German socialist colleagues in *Neu Beginnen* and the ISK, Chaloner's recruitment of a team of young German journalists to create *Der Spiegel*, Howard's relationship with the daughter of the doctor in whose house he was billeted and the 10,000 British men, including Thexton, who met and married their wives in Germany. The policy of personal reconciliation received official endorsement with the formation of officially approved Anglo-German discussion groups and cultural centres, and from May 1947 in official directives and instructions.

The twelve individuals justified a policy of Reconstruction, Renewal and Reconciliation in different ways, on the basis of the 'mental baggage' each brought with them. The older generation drew on personal religious beliefs, referring to the need to 'rebuild civilisation' or 'save the soul of Germany', and their understanding of the British Empire as a force for good in the world. Those who had lived through the occupation of the Rhineland after the First World War wrote of the need to support democratic politicians, and prevent a recurrence of economic and social conditions which had favoured the rise of extreme political parties, by which they meant both Nazis and Communists. The socialists argued that only a 'positive socialist policy' could prevent a return to fascism. Some members of the younger generation, such as Chaloner and Howard, were motivated by the ideals for which they had fought the war, or principles acquired at school or from their families, such as an understanding of what they considered morally right. At the same time, they and others were concerned for the



future, trying to rebuild their careers or personal lives after six years of war, and exploiting the situation as best they could for their personal advantage.

It has been claimed that the stable democracy which later emerged in the Federal Republic was primarily the result of economic success, not the political or social steps taken by the Western Allies.<sup>15</sup> This reflects the view expressed by many Germans in the first three years after the war, repeated and assumed to be correct by many of the British, including Montgomery and Douglas, that 'it's no use talking to us about democratic ideals unless you first fill our bellies.'<sup>16</sup> It can, of course, be argued that there is a close connection between capitalism, economic prosperity and liberal democracy, but this was by no means apparent in the 1940s and it was not a simple matter of cause and effect. Many of the early British attempts to promote political renewal achieved few direct results. If however, the process of democratisation in Germany is seen as a 'learning process' that extended over 50 years from 1945, through social and political liberalisation in the 1960s, to eventual reunification in 1990 and beyond,<sup>17</sup> the twelve individuals discussed in this study may have made a significant contribution, not through deliberate structural reforms or 'forced reorientation',<sup>18</sup> but by promoting dialogue and debate, and offering various institutional models the Germans could compare with their own traditions and modify, adopt or reject, as they thought best.

To return to the question implied by the title of this thesis, did the British in occupied Germany succeed in 'winning the peace' after winning the war? There has been no further war in Europe,<sup>19</sup> and both Britain and Germany have been politically stable and economically prosperous,<sup>20</sup> so it could be argued that the goal of 'winning the peace' was achieved. On the other hand, many people in both countries are still coming to terms with the past; in Germany with memories of death, violence, the Holocaust, loss of their homes, and forty years of division between a capitalist West and Communist East. In Britain, although the ruptures were less, some still have difficulty coming to terms with the end of Empire and a diminished global role. It is hoped that this thesis can contribute to a better understanding of

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<sup>15</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *The Fontana History of Germany: 1918-1990, The Divided Nation* (London: Fontana Press, 1991), p150

<sup>16</sup> FO 1030/170, quoted by Douglas in his lecture to the Imperial Defence College, 12 June 1947

<sup>17</sup> As proposed in Herbert, 'Liberalisierung als Lernprozeß'

<sup>18</sup> As claimed by Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans*

<sup>19</sup> Excluding former Yugoslavia

<sup>20</sup> Including East Germany, if the years from 1950-90 are compared with the previous forty years from 1910 to 1950 and allowing for a peaceful *Wende* and reunification in 1990.

British aims in occupied Germany and assist further research on how Germany emerged from Nazi dictatorship, war and foreign occupation, and the role of the British in helping or hindering this process. In so doing it can help us understand better the legacies of competing ideologies, oppressive governments, violent wars, and the subsequent defeat, occupation and rule of one country by another, that continue to cast their long shadows<sup>21</sup> on the world today.

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<sup>21</sup> Axel Schildt, 'The Long Shadows of the Second World War: The Impact of Experiences and Memories of War on West German Society' *German Historical Institute London Bulletin*, Vol. XXIX, No.1, (May 2007), pp28-49



## Appendix A: Note on Sources

### Personal memoirs and autobiographies

Personal memoirs and autobiographies were a useful starting point for further research in the primary archives, and a valuable indication of the subject's attitudes, intentions and motivation. They have the advantage of providing a coherent and easily comprehensible account of the time the subject spent in Germany, together with their own accounts of their aims and intentions. On the other hand, they have the disadvantage that, written with hindsight, they may project an artificial coherence onto the course of events and, consciously or unconsciously, seek to present the author and his or her actions in a favourable light, whilst being selective as to what they include.

Personal memoirs have been used for seven of the twelve individuals, though they vary greatly in scale and quality. Montgomery and Douglas both published autobiographies,<sup>1</sup> but whereas Montgomery based his on a contemporary 'log' written for him while he was in Germany,<sup>2</sup> Douglas based his on personal memories and made less use of official documents. Michael Howard published his memories of his time in Germany in 2010, based on letters he wrote as a young officer to his parents, carefully preserved by his mother.<sup>3</sup> Bishop's and Albu's memoirs both consist of unpublished typescripts written in retirement,<sup>4</sup> whereas Berry recorded his memories at the end of his life on an extended series of over forty tapes.<sup>5</sup> Ingrams did not write a personal memoir of his time in Germany, but a published account of a journey across the Sahara to take up a position in Africa shortly afterwards, is an excellent source for his views on the future development of the British Empire and complements official papers he wrote in Germany.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein*, K.G. (London: Collins, 1958); Sholto Douglas, *Years of Combat: the first volume of the autobiography of Sholto Douglas, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Douglas of Kirtleside G.C.B. M.C. D.F.S.* (London: Collins, 1963); Sholto Douglas with Robert Wright, *Years of Command: the second volume of the autobiography of Sholto Douglas, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Douglas of Kirtleside G.C.B. M.C. D.F.S.* (London: Collins, 1966)

<sup>2</sup> The 'log' is preserved with Montgomery's personal papers at the Imperial War Museum (IWM) as four volumes of 'Notes on the Occupation of Germany', IWM BLM85-88.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Howard, *Otherwise Occupied: Letters home from the ruins of Nazi Germany* (Tiverton: Old Street Publishing, 2010)

<sup>4</sup> Alec Bishop, *Look Back with Pleasure* (Beckley, Sussex: unpublished, 1971), IWM ref. AB1; Austen Albu, *Back Bench Technocrat*, unpublished autobiography, Churchill Archives Centre ref. AP15

<sup>5</sup> Bath Record Office, 'The Life and Times of Sir Vaughan Berry', set of 45 CDs

<sup>6</sup> Harold Ingrams, *Seven across the Sahara* (London: John Murray, 1949)

## Official documents

The official papers of the British Military Government and Control Commission in Germany have been used extensively but can be problematic. Only 1% of the records have survived; the rest were lost in transit from Germany to Britain or destroyed, apparently haphazardly rather than due to any consistent archival policy.<sup>7</sup> There is extensive duplication and many gaps in the record, which makes it difficult to follow any person or theme over time. Many papers deal with routine and often trivial administrative matters. The papers are poorly catalogued in The National Archives (hereafter TNA). An additional 11 volume finding aid and inventory, published in 1993, is indispensable.<sup>8</sup> Identifying the author and the recipient of papers can be difficult, due to the practice of addressing and signing papers by official position, rather than name, and initialling papers on behalf of others. Many of the papers are in a poor physical condition. However, those that have survived have been kept in their original context, as working files of the relevant individuals or departments. The official archives were most useful in combination with other sources, for example to check facts and claims made by individuals in memoirs or oral history interviews, but in some documents the subjects explicitly expressed what they aimed to achieve in Germany, or discussed this with others, for example in personal correspondence, speeches or newspaper and magazine articles. These were useful as they related directly to the questions posed in the thesis, but, as with all types of source, statements of opinion had to be treated with caution. The authors may not have been expressing their own views, but conforming to an official line, writing or saying what they believed the recipient wished to hear, or writing a speech to be delivered by someone else. Understanding the context could reveal issues which were not apparent from reading the document in isolation.

## Personal papers

Collections of personal papers in the public archives have been used extensively where they exist. These were very variable, some extensive including a diary, personal correspondence, and official papers, others little more than a few newspaper cuttings. The Montgomery and

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<sup>7</sup> Ian D. Turner (ed.), *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones 1945-1955* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1989), pp328-9

<sup>8</sup> Adolf M. Birke, Hans Booms, Otto Merker (eds) in cooperation with the Deutsches Historisches Institut, London, Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Hannover, *Akten der britischen Militärregierung in Deutschland – Sachinventar 1945-1955 / Control Commission for Germany British Element – Inventory 1945-1955* (Munich, New Providence, London, Paris: K.G. Saur, 1993)

Bishop papers at the Imperial War Museum (hereafter IWM) are in excellent condition, well catalogued and include much relevant information. Sholto Douglas' papers, in the same archive, contain little on his time in Germany, apart from those used to write his autobiography. Robertson did not keep personal papers, but a reasonably full collection of his official papers has been preserved at TNA. Good collections of personal papers exist for three of the four civilian diplomats and administrators. Berry's papers are held at Somerset Heritage Centre (SHC) and Bath Record Office (BRO) and those of Austen Albu and Harold Ingrams, at Churchill College Archives (CAC). Flanders' papers at the Modern Record Centre (MRC) contain little on Germany, but were useful in providing information on his pre-war connections with German socialists. In the case of Ingrams, many papers are out of context, not held as part of an original file and are unsigned and undated. However, cross-referencing with documents in TNA enabled some of these to be identified as first drafts of papers submitted to an official working party on democratic development in Germany, and were useful in identifying his role and intentions.

### **Oral History**

Oral history sources were used particularly for the 'young men' considered in part 3, for whom there is less material in the public archives compared with both the senior officers and civilian diplomats and administrators. Thexton and Palliser were still alive when research for the study was undertaken, (though unfortunately both have now died), which meant that it was possible to interview them, but not members of the other groups who were all much older.

It is possible that some personal bias was introduced in the two interviews I conducted for this study, despite my best endeavours to follow best interviewing practice, remain objective and ask open-ended questions. On the other hand, the interviews enabled me to cross-check information obtained from other sources, probe for further information, interrogate my sources directly, and ask questions directly related to the themes examined in the thesis. Both interviews have been transcribed, approved by the interviewees, and the recordings

and transcripts lodged at the IWM Sound Archive, where they have been catalogued and form part of the collection open to other researchers and the general public.<sup>9</sup>

Oral history interviews were also used for the other two selected 'young officers', though not as the principal source. Michael Howard was interviewed for the IWM Sound Archive in 2008,<sup>10</sup> and subsequently published a book on his experiences in occupied Germany, comprising his letters to his parents, reprinted verbatim, with a commentary providing background and context.<sup>11</sup> This enabled three types of source to be cross-referenced: the letters; an interview; and his written commentary. With one or two minor exceptions, the three accounts were fully consistent. On the other hand, two journalistic interviews with John Chaloner, conducted by the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, were less reliable.<sup>12</sup> The interviewers asked questions on specific topics, based on a published history of *Der Spiegel*,<sup>13</sup> rather than open ended questions or asking him to tell his story chronologically. Fortunately it was possible to discover some material on Chaloner and the creation of *Der Spiegel* in the National Archives, and I was able to consult an extensive collection of contemporary documents in the private business archive of *Der Spiegel* in Hamburg. Cross checking the factual information in the interviews with contemporary documents revealed inconsistencies and possible errors.<sup>14</sup> Chaloner was in poor health at the time and died three months after the second interview. However, the interviews were still useful, when used together with other sources, in providing evidence of his intentions when he created the magazine.

### **The Imperial War Museum Sound Archive**

There were many more young British officers in occupied Germany than there were Military Governors, generals or senior administrators, so to compensate for the small sample of 'young men with no adult experience but war', and the possibility of personal bias introduced in my interviews with Palliser and Thexton, I consulted the comprehensive collection of experiences of conflict held by the Imperial War Museum Sound Archive (IWM SA) to ensure

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<sup>9</sup> IWM Sound Archive, accession numbers 30895 (J.M.G. Thexton) and 32236/4 (Michael Palliser)

<sup>10</sup> IWM Sound Archive accession number 31405 (Michael Howard)

<sup>11</sup> Michael Howard, *Otherwise Occupied: Letters home from the ruins of Nazi Germany* (Tiverton: Old Street Publishing, 2010)

<sup>12</sup> Der Spiegel Archive, interviews with John Chaloner, 21 Oct. 2003 and 2 Nov. 2006

<sup>13</sup> Leo Brawand, *Der Spiegel - ein Besatzungskind: Wie die Pressefreiheit nach Deutschland kam* (Hamburg: EVA Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2007)

<sup>14</sup> For this reason the interviews with Der Spiegel were not used as a source for factual information unless confirmed by other sources, such as written documents in TNA or DSA

that findings based on detailed research into four individuals were reasonably representative of this group as a whole.

The IWM SA was started in 1972 and is now one of the largest collections of its type in the world, comprising over 50,000 hours of recorded material.<sup>15</sup> The interviewing and collection policy of the archive is inclusive, aiming to record a cross-section of material from all ranks, civilians and soldiers, women and men, conscientious objectors and war heroes. Until recently, the archive has not targeted the British occupation of Germany or the post-war period and so had no agenda which might have biased the material in any direction. One objective of the archive has been to collect experiences of all World War Two campaigns, with interviewees generally recruited through veterans' and regimental associations.<sup>16</sup> Much of the material on post-war Germany appeared at the end of these interviews, after they had recounted their pre-and post-war experiences. Reference to a larger collection enabled me to validate if evidence obtained from the four 'young men' examined in detail was generally representative of this age cohort, although, as with all oral history collections, the archive's selection process and interviewing style will have introduced some bias, and the interviewers did not probe on some specific subjects as much as I would have liked.

The catalogue was searched for interviews with British men and women who served in Germany or Austria between 1945 and 1948 with either the armed forces or the Control Commission and aged between 18 and 32 at the end of the war. All interviews which met these criteria were consulted, except for a small number excluded as being outside the scope of the study or of such poor quality as to be unusable.<sup>17</sup> The resulting selection of twenty men and one woman covered a wide range of family and educational backgrounds, wartime experiences and roles in Germany. There was a bias towards the officer and professional and middle classes, but this is consistent with the aim of the thesis to identify the views of those with authority, power and influence. Only one of the interviewees was a woman, but this reflected the gender balance among British people in occupied Germany.

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<sup>15</sup> Phone conversation with Richard McDonough, Curator, IWM Sound Archive, 9 Feb. 2011

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Interviews with German-speaking Jewish exiles and British servicemen and women who arrived in Germany in 1948 for the Berlin airlift were excluded as being outside the scope of the study. Two further interviews were rejected due to poor quality recordings and one because data relating to the subject's time in Germany had not been digitised and the original tapes could not be found.



The twenty-one IWM Sound Archive interviews used in this study were recorded by IWM full-time or trained freelance staff between 1988 and 2008.<sup>18</sup> Interviewers applied a consistent, open and non-prescriptive 'life history' approach, asking first about family background and education, before moving on to wartime and post-war experiences, which made it possible to collect data and analyse it across a number of interviews. They encouraged the interviewees to tell the story of their lives, not restricting them to a particular theme or time period as, in the view of the curator, it was impossible to know what future historians would consider important. The guidelines given to interviewers were to allow people to say whatever they remembered in their own time and try to capture the unique experience of the individual; being flexible as to the style of the interview, asking open ended questions, and using any specialist knowledge the interviewer might possess to decide how best to formulate questions, not challenging apparent errors or contradictions or probing too deeply into personal feelings or emotions.<sup>19</sup>

Unlike most other European countries, Britain's role in the war and its immediate aftermath has, in most respects, been remembered with pride and veterans and their memories are generally respected. The IWM interviewees were describing their experiences as they remembered them, the interview provided a structure and context which may have led them to emphasise some things and neglect others and the passage of time may have led them to forget things or remember them incorrectly. On some sensitive subjects, such as sexual relationships with German women, they tended to speak about what others had done, rather than relate their personal experiences. In general, however, they appeared to answer truthfully to the best of their knowledge. Most gave considered replies to questions, spoke freely and openly about their own experiences and were willing to provide their personal opinions on difficult subjects, such as personal injuries, the destruction caused by Allied bombing and individual relationships with German civilians. Despite very little prompting from the interviewers, there was extensive reference to many of the issues considered in this study. Over 75% (17/21) referred to individual relationships with the local German population and over 50% (12/21) spoke about their attitudes to Russian soldiers or Displaced Persons. Between 25%-50% mentioned the Black Market (9/21) and the destruction they saw in post-

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<sup>18</sup> Phone conversation with Richard McDonough, Curator, IWM Sound Archive, 9 Feb. 2011

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

war Germany (7/21) and four (4/21) referred to concentration camps, war crimes or the Holocaust.<sup>20</sup> An analysis of interviewees by year of birth, education, rank, role in Germany and wartime experience is provided in Appendix B.

### **Other sources**

Other sources were consulted where appropriate to provide further background and context, gain a greater understanding of the selected individuals or explore more fully the cross-cutting themes considered in the thesis. These included the *British Zone Review*,<sup>21</sup> parliamentary debates, Cabinet and Foreign Office papers at TNA, accounts by visiting politicians and journalists, contemporary newspaper articles and two semi-autobiographical novels written by Chaloner. A full list is provided in the bibliography.

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<sup>20</sup> No conclusion can be drawn from the small number making explicit reference to the Holocaust. It can be assumed that all had heard reports of war crimes and atrocities, but few would have had personal experience of the liberation of the camps.

<sup>21</sup> The official fortnightly review of the activities of the Control Commission and Military Government.

## **Appendix B**

### **Analysis of IWM Sound Archive interviewees**

Name	Born	School	University / Higher ed.	Wartime service	Dates in Germany	Highest rank	Position / role	WW2 experience
Garrood	1919	Cranleigh	None	Kings Own / Gurkha Rifles	1945-6	Officer	'Staff duties'	France (1940), India, Cyprus, Egypt, Italy
Mallabar	1924	Not known	None	Not known / signals	1945-6	NCO / Corporal	Army	Normandy, NW Europe
James	1923	Latymer	None	Navy	1946-9	Officer	Naval officer	Arctic convoys, Mediterranean
Taylor	1920	'Minor public school'	None	Navy	1947-9	Officer	Naval officer	Not known
Bicknell	1924	Radley	Oxford	Intelligence officer in Air Ministry	1945	Officer	Russian interpreter	UK
Falle	1919	'Boarding school' Jersey	None	Navy	1946-8	Officer	Interpreter	Japanese POW
Lucas	1916	Not known	None	RAF	1947-8	NCO / Corporal	RAF ground crew	North Africa, Italy
Dye	1923	Grammar school	Birkbeck	Signals / Naval gunnery / Intelligence corps	1945-8	NCO / Sergeant	De- nazification	Normandy (wounded)
Brown	1917	Not known	None	Royal Corps of Signals	1945-??	Officer	Austria, Signals officer	UK
Bland	1913	Not known	Liverpool	Royal Engineers	1945	Officer	COGA, Intelligence	India, Burma

(Stephen) Hastings	1921	Eton	Sandhurst	Scots Guards / SAS / SOE	1945-8	Officer / Captain	Skiing instructor	North Africa / France, Italy
Fisher	1913	Not known	Teacher training	Friends Ambulance Unit	1945-8	n/a	FAU / BFES	UK, Ethiopia
Gregg-Rowbury	1925	Not known	Teacher training	RAF air crew	1947-9	NCO / sergeant	CCG / DPs	UK, Bombers
Greenhalgh	1914	Grammar school	None	War Office	1945	NCO / sergeant	Personnel selection	UK
Norman	1916	Grammar school	None	Home Office	1947-60s	n/a	Denazification/ public safety	UK
(Martin) Hastings	1916	Not known	Not known	'Armoured division'	1945-??	Officer	Army	Malta, Italy, NW Europe
Chambers	1924	Not known	None	Royal Engineers	1945-7	NCO / sergeant?	Army	NW Europe
Travett	1919	Not known	None	Not known	1945-??	NCO / Corporal	Army	Malta, Sicily, NW Europe
Heppell	1922	Grammar School	None	Royal Corps of Signals / Indian Ordnance Corps / Gurkhas	1946	Officer	Judge Adv. General's dept	India
Ashcombe	1925	Latymer	None	RAF	1945-7	Leading aircraftman	Welfare	Normandy, NW Europe
Harland	1920	Bootham	Oxford	Salvation Army Unit	1946-7	n/a	DPs	UK

**References made to themes discussed in the study**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Destruction</b>	<b>Black market</b>	<b>Russians / DPs</b>	<b>War crimes / Holocaust</b>	<b>Relationships with Germans</b>
Garrood	No	Yes	No	No	No
Mallabar	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
James	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Taylor	No	No	No	No	Yes
Bicknell	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Falle	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Lucas	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Dye	No	No	No	No	Yes
Brown	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Bland	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Hastings (Stephen)	No	No	No	No	Yes
Fisher	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Gregg-Rowbury	No	No	Yes	No	No
Greenhalgh	No	Yes	No	No	No
Norman	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Hastings (Martin)	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chambers	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Travett	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Heppell	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Ashcombe	No	No	No	No	No
Harland	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Total</b>	<b>7/21</b>	<b>9/21</b>	<b>12/21</b>	<b>4/21</b>	<b>17/21</b>

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FO 936/693	Relations between CCG personnel and Germans
FO 936/741	Operation "Sparkler" and large scale black market activities
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